

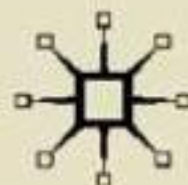
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SCHELLING, FICHTE AND KANT



KYRIAKI GOUDELI



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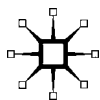
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Challenges to German Idealism

Schelling, Fichte and Kant

Kyriaki Goudeli



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Series Editor's Preface

In the understanding of philosophical modernity surely no period is more important than that in which the systems of German Idealism flourished. The recognition of this appears to be growing each year with the publication of increasingly sophisticated and refined works on Kant and Hegel constantly appearing. Work on Fichte has also grown apace in recent years, reflecting a renewed interest in his contribution to the debates around the nature of reason and subjectivity.

Notably absent from the accounts of German Idealism, however, has been any sustained engagement with the works of Schelling. Despite the recent interest displayed in Schelling by cultural critics such as Slavoj Žižek, there is still scant discussion of Schelling among philosophers. The reasons for this relative lack of interest in Schelling are not hard to seek. Positioned between Fichte and Hegel, he has all too often been assimilated to the positions of the former or rejected due to the influence of the latter. The basis of these motivations for the neglect of Schelling resides in an assumption that the basic outlines of his philosophical position are well known and can be described in terms of a philosophy of identity. This assumption even pervades the interpretation of Schelling's essay *Of Human Freedom*, an essay of critical importance in Heidegger's history of Being. Heidegger's interpretation of *Of Human Freedom* assimilates this work to the positions which are overcome within it, thus ensuring a deep continuity between Heidegger's interpretation of Schelling and Hegel's.

It is the signal contribution of this work by Kyriaki Goudeli to challenge these prevalent readings of Schelling and thus present him anew for the contemporary reader. It is the aim of *Renewing Philosophy* to stimulate debate and refocus interest in the problems of philosophy's encounter with modernity and to enable, in the process, new resources to be opened in philosophical responses to contemporaneity. Goudeli's book meets all these criteria. In re-presenting Schelling as a thinker whose resources are much greater than conventionally presented, she forces reconsideration of his relationship to Kant and Fichte, also in the process indicating the ways in which Schelling presents a way past German Idealism through his very comprehension of it.

In addition to this revisiting of the traditions of philosophical modernity, Goudeli also makes clear in her account of Schelling's

approaches to mythology and cosmology, the contemporary relevance of Schelling to an age in which environmental and mythological concerns have re-emerged as of political and theoretical interest. The combination of the reworking of the understanding of modernity with an appraisal of a major philosopher which releases his thought for a contemporary fate make clear that this work is one which has the potential to force a *renewal* of philosophical thinking.

GARY BANHAM

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List of Abbreviations

AW	Schelling, F. W. J., <i>Ages of the World</i>
Bruno	Schelling, F. W. J., <i>Bruno, or, On the Natural and the Divine Principles of Things</i>
BT	Heidegger, M., <i>Being and Time</i>
CJ	Kant, I., <i>Critique of Judgement</i>
CPR	Kant, I., <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>
FK	Hegel, G. W. F., <i>Faith and Knowledge</i>
FPM	Heidegger, M., <i>The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics</i>
FTP	Fichte, J. G., <i>Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy</i>
ID	Heidegger, M., <i>Identity and Difference</i>
IM	Heidegger, M., <i>An Introduction to Metaphysics</i>
KPM	Heidegger, M., <i>Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics</i>
LKPP	Arendt, H., <i>Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy</i>
Of Human Freedom or Freedom essay	Schelling, F. W. J., <i>Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom</i>
PN	Schelling, F. W. J., <i>Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature</i>
Prolegomena	Kant, I., <i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics</i>
PS	Hegel, G. W. F., <i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i>
SK or WS	Fichte, J. G., <i>Science of Knowledge</i>
SL	Hegel, G. W. F., <i>Hegel's Science of Logic</i>
STI	Schelling, F. W. J., <i>System of Transcendental Idealism</i>

Introduction: from the Logic to the *Logogrif* of Experience

If in ancient Greek cosmogony it is *Moira* that allots to each god its province,¹ as the untransgressable, delimited field of activity and power, in the Age of Reason this task is assigned to Reason itself, which is called to institute a tribunal upon itself and justify its lawful claims.² The latter can be sought only in that province which is conditioned by our faculty of sensibility, and by no means in the realm of the unconditioned, that always seduces the 'light dove' of Reason, which 'cleaving the air in her free flight, and feeling its resistance, might imagine that its flight would be easier in empty space' (*CPR*, A5). Reason should rise from its immaturity and clearly demarcate the provinces of knowledge and faith, cognition and feeling, thought and will, theory and praxis. Accordingly, the relation between man and world is itself divided up into separate cognitive–contemplative, moral–practical, scientific and religious provinces, all being objects of Kant's wide-ranging philosophical investigations. The issue though, around which the latter revolve, and that seems to most stimulate philosophical interest and nourish the debate among German idealist thinkers, is that which inquires into the modes and the possibility of cognitive experience. Kant brought the various investigations concerning the claims of Reason under the central question: 'How are *a priori* synthetic judgements possible?' (*CPR*, B19). The very formulation of this question includes, in a condensed way, the core of Kant's philosophical thought, namely, transcendental logic, and pre-empts his notion of experience as an *object* of the cognising subject, establishing thereby its conceptualisation in dualistic terms, theoretical and practical, conditioned and unconditioned. This division assumes a clear separation between finitude and infinity, and fixates the concept of the Absolute, and Reason's inherent tendency to conquer it, either in the form of

truth or in the form of freedom. However, as long as this aim is rendered unattainable, Reason is restricted to its legitimate provinces and becomes, with regard to its unconditionable claims, either prescriptive or perennially melancholic.

In this project, we intend to explore the adventures of Reason not only through its limits, its disillusionments and melancholy but also through its creative perplexities, its transmutations and mostly through its abduction. But who could abduct Reason in the age of its triumph? Perhaps, it may be Reason itself, through its very act of self-justification, which engenders its eclipse. However, it is not this form of abduction that mostly interests us. Here, we are concerned with an act of transmutation, the possibility of a creative loss that occurs not in the introspective and narrow field of Reason's self-examination but in its confrontation with the cosmic becoming. The focus of this project is precisely the exploration of Reason's transformation in this critical transition, with a view to discovering the possibility of an alternative to the philosophy-of-the-concept approach towards cognitive experience. Our point of departure is precisely the conceptual approach towards experience in its, perhaps, most sophisticated expression, namely, the Kantian notion of experience.

Accordingly, we focus on the exploration of the various responses, in the context of German Idealism, to the main Kantian question, 'How are *a priori* synthetic judgements possible?' and the concomitant conceptualisations of the notion of experience. Through this enterprise, we first discover the main tenets of the grounding of transcendental logic, of representational, conceptual thinking, and the limits of this mode of thinking. The investigation of the Kantian question is carried through Kant's differing approaches in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (CPR) and the *Critique of Judgement* (CJ), Fichte's *Science of Knowledge* (SK), and Schelling's early and middle works. The discovery of the limits of transcendental logic does not develop from a Hegelian – speculative – standpoint, as might be expected, but from a Schellingian alternative, which introduces an original challenge to transcendental logic, by means of Schelling's insight into the concept and act of *logogrif*.³ As will be seen, Schelling's *logogrific* approach towards the central Kantian question and the philosophical themes implicated thereby – the question of judgement power, the notion of the self and the issue of freedom – in fact shakes transcendental logic. And this, not simply by introducing an alternative logical model, but by breaking the rigid boundaries between logical and mythical thinking and reconsidering the possibility of an alternative to the Kantian and Fichtean notion of

experience, emerging out of the intertwinement of these distinct realms. The idea of *logogrif*, however, should not be understood as some sort of middle term or any kind of outcome of the investigation of the relation between *Logos* and *Mythos*, since Schelling's thematic in the works we examine, is not focused on this wider issue. This should be the object of other research, as indeed the present study will show in its conclusion.

The scope of this research focuses on the specific configuration of *Logos* in the form of transcendental logic, as the predominant form of modern, conceptual logic and its critical challenge through the original notion of *logogrif*, which evokes and recalls elements of mythical *thinking* and *action*. The idea of *logogrif*, as such, is not *explicitly* elaborated by Schelling. Schelling himself simply *announced* the task for the formulation of a new mythology in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (STI) (1800), without any further elucidation of this bold statement until his late writings, which attempt to establish a systematic philosophy of mythology. Here, though, we are not concerned with the investigation of traditional mythology and its relation to logical patterns of thought. Instead, we follow a reverse path. We start with the main Kantian question and through the discovery of the severely limited character of the notion of experience provided by transcendental logic, we find in Schelling's responses the potential for a new notion of experience, intimated in the idea of *logogrif*. We detect, though, even within the context of the transcendental approach, *elements* that already augur the possibility and the need to seek forms of an alternative mode of thinking and expression. The latter is preliminarily understood as a mode that does not unfold from the Kantian conception of Pure Reason, the 'land of oughts', with the perennial demands of Reason to seek the unconditioned, its consequent bounds and retreat to faith or melancholy, its necessary and inevitable restriction to transcendental logic – as the only secure and legitimate zone – in which Reason may find the satisfaction from the use of its principles. Instead, these elements – which are found in Kant's notion of *spontaneity* and *free play*, and Fichte's notion of *productivity* – anticipate the dissolution of the sharp boundaries between finitude and infinity, knowledge and faith, pure logic and experience, conceptual thinking and feeling or will. They also introduce the perspective of considering logic as an act of self-generative productivity, which potentially alludes to unknown forces and unpredictable acts, and from this point of view harbours a mythic dimension.

The main challenge to transcendental logic comes through Schelling's original insights, though his early writings develop from a

transcendental standpoint. However, the orbit of his thought seems to radically diverge from the gravitational field of pure logic, in order to reformulate the original questions and readdress them not simply as part of Logic's self-interrogation, but as parts of the cosmic paradoxes and living experiences. The major break with transcendental logic comes with Schelling's main shift – from the *Identity Philosophy* phase (1800–4) to his *Of Human Freedom* treatise (1809) up to the *Deities of Samothrace* (1815) – which resets the scene for the debate, putting on the stage the paradoxes of the cosmos itself, rather than the Tribunal of Reason, as the field proper into which the aporias and paradoxes of logic itself could be readdressed. The paradoxes of pure logic are no longer sheer conceptual issues, but express the riddles of life and the cosmos itself. From forms of pure thought, we are transposed to shapes of life, where the latter term intends to include experience in a more inclusive mode, through concept and feeling, cognition and will, reflexivity and immediacy, conceptual appropriation and free play, order and chaos, transcendence and immanence. According to Schelling, the Kantian questions cannot be adequately addressed so long as they remain restricted to the boundaries of the concepts of the understanding, despite the latter's claim on their right to organise experience. The 'I', even though retreating to the phenomenal security of the limits of its concepts, cannot content itself with its entrenchment from the world and the rigid separation of knowledge from faith. The major logical questions become part of the paradoxes of the cosmic becoming and, consequently, can no longer be exhausted within the limits of inquiry into the transcendental conditions of experience, not even into the retrospective conclusions of its recollection. For it is not only Schelling's suggestion that there is always 'an irreducible remainder'⁴ – which seems to resist any orderly classification on behalf of rational illumination – that leads to the need for another form of expressing experience; it is also Schelling's implicit discovery that the very rational reconstruction of experience may take a perplexed, elusive and allusive form, which attempts to retain the vital paradoxes of experience and carry within it its dynamic movement and life, in both its openness and closedness, familiarity and strangeness, immanence and transcendence. The notion of *logogrif* is precisely the transitive term that attempts to describe, this time, the transition of experience itself from its enacted phase to its conceptual expression, and in this sense the term itself aspires to participate in both phases, as both form of thought and form of life.

We start with the investigation of the central Kantian question through an examination of his attempt to deduce the employment of the concepts of understanding, for this undertaking essentially constructs the main tenets of conceptual–representational thinking and establishes the notion of experience as the *object* of the subject's conceptual construction. Kant's enterprise of the Deduction of the Categories results in the necessity of establishing the formal, continuous identity of the self through time. The concepts of the understanding spring spontaneously from the human mind and act as the unifying, formal rules, which render experience possible at all. The spontaneity of the concept is associated with the notion of a unifying rule. Both spontaneity and order seem, paradoxically, to constitute the necessary conditions of experience. The deeper question of legitimacy, namely, the self-legitimacy of Reason's spontaneity, thereby arises, and indeed as one which delivers order upon the passive and chaotic sense material. A *spontaneity of order* can resort only to another illegitimate demand, namely the self's certainty of its identity, which is claimed to exist 'before its eyes' (CPR, A108). Thus, the Deduction of the Categories, and along with it the main tenets of logical–conceptual thinking, draws their ultimate validation from the necessity of the establishment of the formal identity of the self, which is self-confirmed by the organisation of experience according to its formal rules. Spontaneity is absorbed by the primordial identical self, and thus its role is reduced to the deliverance of order according to the needs of a formally unified self through time. Accordingly, spontaneity undergoes a further severe deformation: it becomes a transcendental concept.

The story of the limits of Pure Reason begins from this point. The concepts of the understanding seek their legitimacy in the identity of the self, which now appears more as a desperate demand rather than as an unquestionable foundation of experience. Reason's spontaneity can exist only as prescribing order, and so its employment is limited to the province of the applicability of this order, namely to the passive, inactive intuition, through the aid of the understanding. Hence, spontaneity is identified with a lawgiving, ordering activity, which, moreover, pertains exclusively to human Reason. Reason discovers its limits, according to Kant, as lawgiver, for it cannot give order to anything that falls outside the bounds of experience. Reason can only organise what appears as inactive to it, as its object. The limits of Reason arise then precisely because spontaneity is conceived in terms of order, of a law-giving faculty. Kant's fruitless conclusions of the Deduction do not

derive from his 'resorting' to the infinity of the understanding and the thereby alleged introduction of the notion of the absolute subject, as Heidegger claims.⁵ In contradistinction, Kant's resorting to the spontaneity of understanding does not prevent him from establishing the radical limitations of the subject, rather than its absolute status. For the concepts of understanding, conceived as order-giving rules, are exclusively conditioned by what seems to be susceptible to their lawgiving authority. Consequently, the problem is not Kant's resorting to the notion of spontaneity. Instead, we find in it a potentially exceptional insightful notion, especially so long this is conceived as both infinite and yet finite, self-enacted and yet limited.

The problem is not one of an absolute reliance on the notion of spontaneity, but rather, contrariwise, that this notion has not been adequately expanded. Firstly, in Kant's system, spontaneity has been restricted only to the realm of human Reason, while nature and intuition stand for a lifeless, inactive mass in need of external organisation. Secondly, spontaneity is conceived in terms of order-giving and indeed, as the type of order which corresponds to the formally, identical-through-time self, that is, to the *universal* and *necessary* rules that should arrange the temporally and spatially distinguished moments of empirical experience. Hence, spontaneity is eventually associated with static classification, sequential and systematic arrangement and in this context, reaches its most arid and self-refuted conceptualisation, namely, that of a *transcendental* concept, a *logical* presupposition for the possibility of experience, as if the very thought of the conditions of the possibility of experience is not itself an act of spontaneity.

In the *CJ*, where Kant addresses the same fundamental question of how a *priori* judgements are possible from the standpoint of the contingent particular, we are provided with a new perspective on the concept of spontaneity, which potentially suggests a more sensational dimension in the relation between man and the world and the notion of experience. These derive from Kant's innovative notion of *free play* between imagination and understanding during reflective judgement's preoccupation with the contingent particular. Here, spontaneity seems freed from its rule-giving role and manifests itself rather as a *feeling of pleasure*, arising from the free interplay between the subject and its contingent representations. However, so long as the judgement of the contingent is addressed from the transcendental standpoint, its promising dynamism annuls itself. The contingent, although not constituted by the laws of the understanding, *should* conform to them, for otherwise, the identity of the self, as the latter has been established in the *CPR*, could not be

sustained. If the gap between the laws of the understanding and the contingency of experience initially appears to be mediated by a free play between them, the requirements of a transcendental notion of experience command a different solution. This is given by the *Architectonic* of Pure Reason, whose principles establish its internal systematicity and harmony. In this context, the judgement of the particular is rendered universal and necessary by virtue of the *prescriptive* conformity of the contingent with the laws of the understanding. Hence, if experience, so far, has been *constituted* by the laws of the understanding, now it is *prescribed* by the precepts of Reason, so that it satisfies Reason's Architectonic. Accordingly, spontaneity regains its order-giving role, this time not by means of constitutive rules, but through Reason's precepts for the securing of its inner harmony. The prescriptive universality and necessity of the judgement of the particular, is, in turn, deduced not by means of the constitutive identity of the self, but by means of a normative intersubjective communicability: put summarily, this enhances the normative dimension of the notion of subjectivity, as long as its duties are not only the maintenance of its identity, but also its universal communicability, through discipline and culture.

Through Kant's philosophical investigations, we are left with a dualistic/representational account of experience, which results either in a constitutive or in a normative appropriation of the world, by the laws of understanding or the precepts of Reason respectively; in both cases, a model that attempts to transfer order, transparency and unity, and resolve the contradictions and paradoxes arising from man's engagement with the world. The world though, remains fundamentally alien and opaque, reconfirming Reason's radical finitude and the unattainability of its perennial striving for self-legitimacy.

We turn thence to Fichte's response to the Kantian question, since he unfolds his project precisely with a view to refuting the representational model of experience. Fichte's project intends to provide an account of experience that would do away with the sharp Kantian dichotomies between the conditioned and unconditioned provinces of Reason, necessity and freedom, cognition and will, theory and praxis. He reformulates the Kantian question into the following: 'What is the source of the system of presentations which are accompanied by the feeling of necessity, and of this feeling of necessity itself?'⁶ For, according to Fichte, experience is defined precisely as the system of the representations that are accompanied by the feeling of necessity, and the main task of philosophy is to furnish the ground of all experience.

Fichte's extraordinary answer is that the source of the feeling of necessity, which grounds all experience, is the very feeling of absolute freedom of the self-positing self, which is itself a factual and incontestable necessity. Experience then, is defined as the ever-producing deeds of the self's unlimited productivity, as long as the self itself is conceived as 'an absolute productive power', an infinite outreaching activity. The Kantian dualisms are definitely dissolved by the overwhelming activity of the ego's absolute power, only now, the world, from being mere representation, becomes an annoying check on the ego's unconditionable and voluntaristic expansion. Nevertheless, we find in Fichte's notion of *productivity* an interesting insight that, in combination with his reconsideration of the notion of intuition as active, potentially releases the notion of experience from its sheer logical, conceptual reconstruction and imports to it the problematic of *powers* rather than of pure concepts.

Fichte, however, does not extricate himself from the kernel of the representational model of thinking, since productivity pertains exclusively to the subject, and experience is essentially rendered as its property. The subject assumes an absolute status, whose self-reverting activity intends to ground and generate Reality as a whole, so long as every entity acquires its real existence by virtue of its falling into the productivity field of the self-positing ego. In this context, the spontaneous productive activity of the ego becomes both all-inclusive and the grounding of all experience. The Kantian dualism is substituted by the monolithic and engulfing identity of the self-positing ego, suspending any difference or contradiction in man's engagement with the world and with himself. If in Kant's system thought and emotions are severely kept separate, in Fichte's they are entirely identical, reduced to the stormy impulse of the primordial ego, losing any relative autonomy, solidifying thus the assertive identity of the self. In turn, experience is determined not by means of the *logic of the concepts* but through the *logic of the will*. The latter seems to dissolve the Kantian categories into the crucible of the primordial, atemporal, self-positing act, which, however, recurs with any action of the self, breaking the succession of time with an act of eternity. No matter how insightful the latter idea is, it loses its fascinating implications, as long as the paradoxes of experience are intended to be accommodated by the repetitive, predictable transparency of the determinations of the self-positing ego.

Overall, the most critical conclusion deriving from Kant's and Fichte's account of experience is the *ultimate failure of any deductive enterprise*, in the various forms that this task took in their recurrent

attempts to justify the objective validity of either Reason's cognitive and aesthetic possessions or the self-positing ego's synthetic actions. It seems that Reason, so long as it abstracts itself from the cosmos, lies in need of a firm foundation for its claims via its self-justification. The latter, though, would always prove to be ultimately unattainable, only to be founded upon axiomatic or normative demands, such as the formal identity of the subject, the intersubjective communicability, the infinite synthetic power of the ego, that is, claims that do not move far away from the realm of a 'human-all-to human' faith. The major issue of Reason's self-justification remains thus in suspense as indeed the very demand of self-justification, at least in the form of universal validity, is problematic in the first place.

It is in Schelling's thought that we meet a radical break with representational thinking and the concomitant need of 'logic's self-justification'. According to Schelling, experience is not merely reconstructed by the subject, nor is the subject always able to recollect its experiences consciously and, moreover, formatively. Schelling introduces the bold statement that the subject may also be *seized* by experience, and that the conscious appropriation of experience does not necessarily imply the subject's *Bildung*. Conceptual representations are but a configuration of the power of human intelligence, which discovers its relative autonomy from the cosmic process and attempts to capture its movement by means of abstraction, and thereby to resist its – that is, the cosmic process's – seizing power upon it. Thus, reflection is a power of abstraction from the infinite complexity of reality, and indeed one associated with a specific and rather slender dimension of human subjectivity, namely that of self-consciousness. However, reflection's conceptual constructions are not dismissed as fictions of subjective fancy or entirely impertinent abstractions, for the latter themselves are a moment, a manifestation of the various forms that cosmic forces, in their interaction, may take. Man himself is conceived as a 'nexus of living forces',⁷ part of and interacting with the cosmic forces. Hence, man can seize and be seized by its experiences because he is conceived in the same dynamic and yet not identical terms. This means that Schelling does not intend to provide us with another transcendental instrument for explaining the constitution of the cosmos by means of the methodology of 'forces'. The latter are not meant to be conceived as some sort of fundamental constituent elements that allegedly construct the cosmos through their infinite combinations. Schelling's use of the term 'force' lies in the antipodal position since

by means of it he attempts to hint at the inexplicability of cosmic processes rather than at its rational and lawful exegesis. Through the terminology of forces, which later gives its place to the terminology of *potencies*, Schelling reunifies man with the cosmos, by means of their most multiple differentiation. Cosmic becoming, in which man is an active part, is the process of the movement, the interaction, the transformations and the transmutations of multiple potencies. These, far beyond any mechanical conceptualisation, appear as self-moving, living, unknown and yet familiar, inscrutable and yet manifest powers, describing the mystery of life itself. The latter is mostly described as an ever-recurrent and omnipresent *act of longing*, yearning, desire for self-expression as active unity. Nature, empirical reality, experience, is no longer the lifeless or passive object which can be resolved into the laws of conceptual thought. Experience is itself alive, a network of potencies, which may not only resist rational powers but may also puzzle and seize them. As such, the potencies are called gods: these are no longer expelled to an unknowable spiritual beyond, but transpire from the very sensual realm, spiritualising the natural and naturalising the spiritual, bringing back the paradox to the conceptually transparent, rendering the 'beyond' immanent.

In this context, reflection acquires a creative and plastic dimension, as opposed to its rigidity in the representational model of experience. If in the transcendental context reflection finds the abstract thoughts of a pure logical subject which bends back to itself, in the context of potencies, reflection finds the activity of the potencies in which the subject consists. In fact, the very reflective act is a potency itself; it is longing reflecting back to see its image. Here reflection depicts longing's self-formation, longing giving shape to itself, longing expressing itself, giving itself concrete character, individuality and differentiation from an amorphous and self-consuming, untamed craving. This, however, seems to be the very material which reflection strives to bend, to tame and formulate, or rather, a part of longing, contra to itself, bends upon itself and shapes itself. However, what it sees and what it shapes is always a complex of intractable powers, whose formation is part of their own movement, and thus dynamic, restless, transitive, elusive. It is a formation which partially expresses and thus illuminates the nature of longing, and from this standpoint, it is the *logic of the longing*. However, this formation is itself movable, transmutable, mostly ineffable, and yet recognisable and familiar – as the colours – and from this standpoint, it is the *logic of a riddle; a logogrif*.

Logogrif, as the reflection of longing upon itself, is not only the word of longing but also its *act*. As such, *logogrif* contains not only the thoughtful reflection on experience but it is a form of experience itself. The *image* which longing sees in its reflection is not its *representation*, but what is *caught in the net* of its bending movement, for *grifos* originally meant plait, and *logogrif*, the plaited *image* of longing which sees and utters itself. This image apparently is not the image of perception, which replicates the pre-existing forms.⁸ Instead, it is the image which unfolds the sensual density of longing, interrupts momentarily its flow, and depicts an elusive form which utters its unity. The logic of longing consists more in the creative formation of speaking images, and from this point of view, we call it the *imagination of the longing*, the expression of cosmic imagination. For man's longing is part of cosmic longing, and its movement re-enacts the movement of life and cosmic becoming and recalls their paradoxical creativity. *Logogrif* then stands for the active engagement of man with the cosmic enigma: it portrays man's play with the world, in its multiple configurations, wonder and fascination, manipulation and frustration, arrogance and humility, domination and paralysis, joy and despair. These moments are no longer aspects of the subject's conscious life only, but configurations of the uncontrollable movement of the 'nexus of living forces', as part of the cosmic nexus and thus conscious and unconscious, utterable and ineffable, transparent and inscrutable, but always lived and experienced. *Logos*, though caught in the net of enigma, seems thus more flexible and liberated; though abducted, paradoxically, may feel more comfortable in its new dwelling for it is freed from its duties to conquer the 'unconditioned' and to organise the 'conditioned'. The strict boundaries between them seem to blur in the all-infusing mystery of life, which yet is accessible and tangible, experienced and enacted by man's life itself, which is but part of the cosmic enigma. *Logos* does not strive to impose its laws on the sensible, or to prescribe its precepts to the contingent. It rather prefers to play with both, to let the contingent free, and recognise a fascinating opponent in cosmic spontaneity and contingency. *Logos*, rather than being frustrated by its inability to conquer the absolute, rediscovers meaning in its activities, precisely by virtue of its finitude; not by a self-heroising resolution to perform the extraordinary, but by means of its ability to be perennially fascinated, intrigued, provoked by a puzzling cosmos. In this sense, Reason's previous obsession to justify its claims is rendered meaningless. The question of objectivity,

however, is not dissolved into the mist of a pervasive subjective scepticism; it rather takes on new form, being blended with the cosmic riddles of which Reason itself is part. Reason's claims carry the objectivity of the cosmic paradoxes themselves. Accordingly, the world is no longer comprehensible as potentially conformable to the *Architectonic of Reason*. The latter gives its place to the *Cosmic Theurgy*. This term attempts to grasp the dynamism and paradox of cosmic and non-cosmic becoming, by means of multiple, self-generative, interdependent and yet self-moving potencies, transmutable and transformable to each other, vanishing and ever-recurring, generating and destroying new potencies; or simply, in Schelling's terms, the 'magic of insoluble life'.

Schelling readdresses the questions of experience, judgement and subjectivity in the context of the cosmic theurgy, where their aporias are no longer resolved by Reason's positing solutions, nor expelled to the untrespassable, sacred realm of noumena. Schelling rather draws the aporias to their extremes; for he brings the sacred back to the profane, eternity in time, and renders the sacred accessible through the profane, and the profane inaccessible through the sacred, both fused into the enigmatic movement of 'insoluble life', transpiring its universal theurgy. Schelling's *logogrific* thought attempts to introduce to the notion of experience the *imminence* of the divine, in the irrational marriage of time with eternity, sensuality with spirituality, all-present and unexpected, liberating and paralysing, immanent and transcendent, nourishing the vital engagement of man with the world's paradoxes. From this point of view, Schelling's thought is a powerful voice for the re-enchantment of the world, not by means of the uncritical adoption of old or new religious doctrines, but by virtue of the discovery and rediscovery of the theurgy of life, the history and prehistory of cosmic becoming, in our unique experiences and deeds.

The structure of the book

The structure of the book reflects the main venture of our research, namely, the transition from the logic to the *logogrif* of experience.

The first chapter examines Kant's response to his main question about the possibility of *a priori* synthetic judgements. The latter apply to judgements constitutive of experience, and therefore the foundational conditions of their possibility are sought via the deduction of the categories of understanding. This, as already mentioned, is derived from the establishment of the formal identity of the self and its *a priori*

certainty of this identity. Experience is conceived as being constituted by the formal rules of the understanding, which are spontaneously produced by the reflective act of the subject upon its cognitive faculties.

The second chapter pursues Kant's reconsideration of the same question, this time from the standpoint of the contingent, namely from the particular relations pertaining to empirical experience, which are not exhaustible by the general rules of the understanding. Through the investigation of Kant's attempt to provide the 'lawfulness of the contingent', we find the prescriptive character of experience, in terms of the precepts of Pure Reason, according to its Architectonic structure.

In both the *CPR* and the *CJ*, the notion of experience is defined by means of the subject's constitutive or normative order.

This derives from the limits of the representational model of experience, which is the object of Fichte's critique. According to Fichte, the aporia of synthetic *a priori* judgements cannot be resolved as long as their ground, namely, the transcendental unity of apperception, is not itself grounded. Fichte's project consists in a systematic attempt to establish the identity of the self, which in Kant's context remains insufficiently thematised. In Fichte's system, the formal identity of the self is now conceived as the primordial act of the ego's self-positing: the latter is declared to constitute the fundamental ground of any kind of experience, theoretical and practical, thereby dissolving the antinomy between necessity and freedom, phenomena and noumena, knowledge and will, in the identical act of the self-positing ego. Fichte's enterprise is expounded in his major work, the *SKI* (1794). Here, he deploys his account of 'The Fundamental Principles of the Entire Science of Knowledge', which are claimed as common to both theoretical and practical activity, the latter being conceived in terms of knowledge. The core of his argument is presented in the second part of the *SKI* – where we mainly focus our attention – which consists in his attempt to deduce the grounding principle of the self-positing ego. The content of the third chapter is an investigation of Fichte's enterprise to resolve the Kantian aporia, by means of the radical revision of the transcendental unity of apperception. We argue that Fichte not only fails to deduce his grounding principle, but also provides a narrow theoretical framework that essentially brings the movement of philosophical investigations to a dead end, so long as any contradiction between man, world and himself seems to be engulfed by the 'ego's absolute power', which is declared to ground, generate and determine experience in its totality.

The following four chapters engage with Schelling's philosophy. His thought presents an extraordinary versatility. Almost every single work has a different and unique terminology and an imaginative approach towards the same underlying themes, namely, the investigation into a non-representational account of the relation between man and nature, freedom and necessity, mind and matter, finitude and infinity. However, Schelling's thought has predominantly been reduced to a specific phase of his intellectual development – probably due to Hegel's monochromatic and devastating critique – namely that of the Identity System philosophy (1801–4). Hence, we begin the investigation of Schelling's philosophy with a thorough examination of the System of Identity, in order to gain a deeper insight into the most influential aspect of his thought, and, moreover, in order to understand its relative position within the whole. This constitutes the topic of the fourth chapter. Here, we argue that the Identity principle has indeed been the locus of Schelling's early writings, which considerably restricted the promising dynamism of these works. We proceed to a critical account of the Identity System along with an assessment of Hegel's and Heidegger's critique. Heidegger's is an instantiation of his typical pattern of critique towards German Idealism, namely the unfolding of the latter's philosophical systems from the standpoint of the notion of the Absolute and the 'forgetting' of the notion of finitude. We argue that Heidegger's fixation on this position prevents him from seeing Schelling's radical conceptual shift, which leads him to interpret Schelling's *Of Human Freedom* treatise in the light of the Identity System. Instead, we suggest that the *Of Human Freedom* treatise inaugurates Schelling's rupture with Identity philosophy, and provides his substantial self-critique, along with the introduction of his new approach towards the notion of the Absolute and finitude, which allows his radical revision of the notion of experience. Our research on Schelling focuses on his middle works (1809–15), since from this transitive phase we can gather the transition from logic to *logogrif*, which is the main issue of this book.

In the fifth chapter, we pursue further Schelling's new conceptualisation of the relation between Absolute and finitude, as this has been deployed in the *Ages of the World* (*AW*). Schelling's break with the Identity principle – in *Of Human Freedom* and the *AW* – enables him to perform a disturbing exodus from the transparent realm of logic and his quasi-theological commitment to the Absolute and provide a new context for the examination of the notions of cognitive experience, judgement power, subjectivity and freedom. This new context,

mainly expounded in the *AW*, consists in the dynamic and enigmatic nexus of cosmic potencies, of which man is an active part. From this point of view, experience can no longer be conceived as conditioned or reconstructed by logic's abstracting conceptual presuppositions, since logic itself is already a form of experience, and moreover, part of the cosmic enigma itself. However, what seems to deprive logic of its 'authority', namely its conceptualisation as part of the cosmic potencies, is precisely what provides it with the new dimensions that liberate it from the perennially tormenting duties for the attainment of universal and necessary objectivity and unconditioned freedom. Logic as a part of, and reflection on, the cosmic enigma, is not destroyed and entirely paralysed by the 'forces of chaos': it rather plays with them, recognises them in its own dynamics, it allows itself to experience and blend with them, and becomes *logogrif*. It is as if Schelling's thought performs this sort of movement, and transmutes the potencies of the *AW* into the gods of the *Deities of Samothrace*, in order to provide his *logogrific* depiction of the cosmic enigma, as will be seen in the concluding chapter. Prior to this, we attempt, drawing on the conclusions of the previous chapters, to gain a new approach towards the notion of the self, which constitutes the topic of the sixth chapter.

The sixth chapter examines the different accounts of the notion of the self, as the latter are derived from Schelling's differentiated approaches towards the notion of the Absolute, before and after the break with the Identity principle. Hence, we first discuss Schelling's account of the self, as this has been expounded in his early work, the *STI* (1800), in which we identify the normative character of his account, due to the transcendental requirements of the predominant concept of Identity in this phase. In turn, we endeavour to provide an alternative account, which, although not explicitly presented by Schelling, can nonetheless be garnered from the *Freedom* treatise and the *AW*. Through this, we gain a new insight into the notion of the self, the question of judgement-power and freedom, especially by virtue of the discovery of the role of the unconscious.

We conclude our research on Schelling with his *logogrific* account of the cosmic becoming, as it has been portrayed in the *Deities of Samothrace*. This final chapter is expounded as an experimental example of an alternative mode of thinking, that is the *logogrific*, and is written in a different style from the previous chapters, reflecting Schelling's change of style as well, in the light of his attempt to create a new mythology.

The conclusion defends the need, which emerges from the whole of our research, for a radical reconsideration of the notion of experience, through the break of its transcendental account and by means of its *logogrific* grasp. This points to the requirement for further investigation into the relation between *Logos* and *Mythos*, possibly, this time, beginning with a thorough exploration of mythical thinking in its implicit relation to *Logos*, and the story of the marriages and divorces between philosophy and mythology. In this context, it would be possible to reappraise and further explore the horizons that the *logogrific* approach opens towards the potential of an alternative to the pure logical or traditional mythological patterns of thinking.

1

Kant's Transcendental Deduction: the Conceptual Reconstruction of Experience

In Kant's theoretical philosophy 'pure reason leaves everything to the understanding', for 'the understanding alone can apply immediately to the objects of intuition' (CPR, B383). Hence, in the first part of the CPR Kant explores 'the territory of pure understanding', which is '... the land of truth – enchanting name! – surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean, the native home of illusion ...' (CPR, B295). However, 'that a concept ... should be produced completely *a priori* and should relate to an object, is altogether contradictory and impossible (CPR, A96). How then, he asks, do the concepts of pure understanding apply to experience? By what right can we possess knowledge that is produced only by means of this application?

In Kant's time, deduction was a legal procedure that decides a *quaestio quid juris* by demonstrating that a particular claim or possession is not obtained surreptitiously but lawfully. The deduction of the concepts of understanding means, then, that the latter are likewise brought under such a procedure of proving entitlement. As Kant noted, 'everyone must defend his position directly, by a legitimate proof that carries with it a transcendental deduction of the grounds upon which it is itself made to rest' (A794/B822). Since the grounds in question are the subjective conditions of possible knowledge, he also claims that 'only a single proof is possible, namely, from the concept of the subject'. This general guideline gave rise to a predominant interpretation of the deduction in terms of the unelaborated notion of 'consciousness in general', missing thus the implicit result of Kant's enterprise, which is not the successful deduction of the categories, but rather the construction of the main tenets of the representational pattern of thinking and the establishment of the notion of self-consciousness in terms of this model.

Kant himself considered the task of the deduction in question extremely difficult. Indeed, both editions of the text on the deduction present considerable entanglement, obscurity and internal contradictions. These problems, in combination with the real difficulty of understanding the depth and complexity of Kant's thought, have led to a vast amount of different interpretations and reconstructions of Kant's enterprise. Here, we do not intend to provide a historical exposition or critique of this literature, but only to interpret some basic *critical* points of a specific but influential kind of reading, to the extent that they facilitate the presentation of our understanding and the extraction of the conclusions from Kant's undertaking that are relevant for our discussion. First, we will consider a reading which, based on the spirit of the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (hereafter *Prolegomena*), places at its centre the notion of objectivity of 'consciousness in general'. This not only fails to provide a sufficient argument for the deduction, but also reads Kant in a fruitless way, accentuating the most negative features of his thought. We will then proceed to a reading that attempts to deduce the categories from the notion of the identity of the subject, drawing on D. Henrich's elaboration of the notion of identity. As it will be seen, this interpretation is not only a more suitable ground for the deduction, but also brings out Kant's elaborate problematic of the notion of self-consciousness.

Deduction from knowledge of objects

In this group of arguments, Kant first assumes, in different ways, the already existing knowledge of objects¹ and then deduces the categories from this very assumption, since only by means of the categories is this kind of knowledge possible. The common feature of the arguments is a firm contrast between experience of objects – which includes necessary connections – and subjective states – which are deprived of any kind of necessary connection. This pattern of argument, under the guise of the very idea of judgement itself, exists in both the *Prolegomena* and in the heart of the *CPR*. The judgements produced by the use of the categories are objective, in the sense that they assert necessary and universal validity and are distinct from subjective judgements which consist in contingent and arbitrary representations. This sort of argumentation already anticipates the limits and the outcome of a possible deduction, since it restricts the task of the deduction itself, which, therefore, predetermines its failure. In other words, in the context of this dichotomy, the task of the deduction is narrowed to the justification

of the use of the categories merely by virtue of their 'objectivity-conferring' role. The function of the categories is presented as a rather external superaddition of truth and necessity to otherwise arbitrary, subjective states. The latter are somehow created through mere logical connections, as Kant states in the *Prolegomena*, and hold good only for the subject.² In contrast, the subordination of the subjective statement under the category transforms the former into a 'judgement of experience', which holds true for anyone, since it relates to an object which is 'there' for everyone and distinct from the subject.³

However, once the role of the categories is thus reduced to discrimination and addition of objectivity, the attempt at their deduction is already a foregone failure, due to the way that the subjective/objective distinction is posited. This problem, as we will see, recurs with any similar attempt at the deduction; for the required objectivity is taken as something externally imposed, which inevitably leads to a regressive tactic.

Deduction in the *Prolegomena* to Any Future Metaphysics

In the *Prolegomena*, Kant deduces the categories from the claim that it is only by means of them that a 'judgement of experience' is rendered possible. The latter, however, is merely assumed and taken for granted. The notion of experience already assumes knowledge of objects: 'Experience consists in the synthetic connection of appearances (perceptions) in one consciousness, in so far as this is necessary and so "judgements of experience" possess a new relation, namely to an object' (section 22), which signifies nothing else than its universal validity. Any such claim to universal and necessary validity, however, as a claim to an *a priori* knowledge, requires 'special concepts originally generated in the understanding' (section 18), under which 'the perception is subsumed'. These *a priori* concepts are but the categories.

The notion of the category, as that which by means of its application discriminates an object and contrasts it with mere subjective representations, corresponds to its role as an 'extra-logical constraint' upon the employment of the merely logical function of judgements. Hence, in the subject–predicate relation, the object which is represented by the subject concept has rigidly to be in the position of the subject and can never be a predicate. As Kant clearly states,

They are concepts of an object in general, by means of which its intuition is regarded as determined in regard to one of the logical

functions of judging. Thus the function of the categorical judgement was the relation of the subject to the predicate, e.g., all bodies are divisible. Only in regard to the merely logical employment of the understanding it remains undetermined which of the two concepts one is to give the function of the subject and which that of the predicate. For one can also say: something divisible is a body. Through the concept of substance, however, if I bring the concept of body under it, it is determined that its empirical intuition in experience must always be considered only as subject, never as mere predicate; and so with all the other categories.

(*Prolegomena*, 128)

Therefore, the notion of the category is not taken as a form of a mere logical function within a judgement, but as a constraining rule that somehow makes the use of the mere logical function necessary. The rigid relation between subject and predicate in the judgement reflects the equivalent rigid separation between subject and object, the lack of any mutual interpenetration or interchange of their roles and eventually, as a result of this, their mutual estrangement (for this indisputable knowledge produced by the application of the categories is only a phenomenal one).

Furthermore, the claim on the universality of the application of the categories appears doubtful. For if, as the *Prolegomena* states, 'judgements of perception' are based upon mere logical connections and not upon categorical ones, how can the categories assume their universal applicability to any kind of unity? Are combination and judgement relevant only for objective judgements, and should every subjective state always be considered as incoherent?

Here, Kant's argument fails to deduce the categories, not only because he begs the question – assuming a kind of knowledge which necessarily presupposes the use of the categories – but also because he is inevitably led to this kind of regression by virtue of the role itself which is initially ascribed to the categories (that is, truth-conferring, external constraints). This role, however, is hardly deduced by Kant in the *Prolegomena*, but is only postulated through the axiomatic introduction of the vague concept of 'consciousness in general'. Nevertheless, this failure is not the result of the analytical method of the *Prolegomena*. Even in the *CPR*, where Kant introduces the so-called synthetic method, which forswears appeal to *a priori* knowledge of objects, there are considerable sections that can be read according to this line of argument. For both the synthetic and the analytic

approaches derive from Kant's higher standpoint, namely, that of transcendental logic.

Deduction from the 'objectivity of self-consciousness'

The *CPR*, though the texts of both editions provide a much more sophisticated exposition of the Deduction than the teaching version of the *Prolegomena*, contains many sections that allow a reading in terms of the *Prolegomena*. In the *Critique*, Kant's path is the reverse of that found in the *Prolegomena*: instead of assuming the *a priori* knowledge of objects and seeking to justify the employment of the categories by means of this original assumption, he puts at the centre of his enterprise the necessity of the subject's self-consciousness as the source for the justification of the employment of the categories. As will be shown, this more elaborate strategy does not succeed either in deducing the categories, for it is again built on a transcendental assumption, namely the transcendental unity of apperception. However, through the investigation of this key concept, we gain a deeper understanding of the main tenets of conceptual-representational thinking, and the concomitant conceptualisation of the identity of the self. The success of the deduction endeavour may lie, then, not in the achievement of its original task, but in its side effects, that is, the thematisation of the critical notion of the *transcendental unity of apperception*, and along with it, the elucidation of the meaning and the limits of transcendental logic. However, if the notion of the transcendental unity of apperception is considered as a static concept, as is frequently suggested by Kant himself, we do not gain any further insight into Kant's notion of experience, since we can easily slip into a kind of reading – indeed dominant in the Kantian and neo-Kantian literature – which reiterates, in a reverse way, the argument of the *Prolegomena*.

According to this interpretation, the categories are deduced from the very fact of making judgements whose ground is the 'objective unity of consciousness'. In this context, we first find the introduction of the notion of the transcendental unity of apperception, which is considered objective as opposed to the mere subjective states of inner sense:

... the transcendental unity of apperception is that unity through which all the manifold given in the intuition is united in the concept of an object. Therefore, it is entitled objective and must be distinguished from the subjective unity of consciousness that is a determination of inner sense.

(B139)

At this stage, Kant does not specify the kind of objectivity that he ascribes to the unity of apperception. The character of this objectivity is disclosed when Kant collapses the transcendental unity of apperception to our truth capacity, to the ability of making valid judgements which express knowledge of external and independent-of-the-subject objects: 'A judgement is nothing but the manner in which given modes of knowledge are brought to the objective unity of apperception. This is what is intended by the copula is . . . it indicates their relation to original apperception and its necessary unity'(B141).

Kant elucidates on the nature of objectivity as follows:

Thus to say the body is heavy is not merely to state that the two representations have always been conjoined in my perception, however often that perception be repeated; what we are asserting is that they are combined in the object, no matter what the state of the subject may be.

(B142)

Judgements, therefore, have objectivity as long as they assert something about objects on the basis of perception. An object is something whose reality can be established in many circumstances by anyone, and consequently this is also the kind of objectivity which is ascribed, as immanent property, to self-consciousness; an objectivity understood in terms of the unchangeable unity and sameness of the 'I think'. As W. Walsh describes it: 'The unity of apperception . . . refers not only to any actual self but only to an ideal subject-self which is the same in all of us or would be if we were wholly rational.'⁴ Consequently, he himself posits the question: 'But why should we take at all seriously the supposed self-identical self which represents consciousness in general?'⁵

In brief, the above reading of the *Critique* proceeds as follows: it introduces the notion of the transcendental unity of apperception as ground for the Deduction of the Categories. However, instead of exploring the possible inner *relation* between the unity of apperception and the categories, it identifies the transcendental unity of apperception with the ability of making objective judgements, which draw their validity by virtue of their claim to express knowledge of objects. Since the categories are but the constitutive elements of objective judgements, they can be deduced from the very possibility of making such judgements. The ground of this possibility is the 'objective unity of consciousness'. Therefore, a 'strong' kind of objectivity as immanent

property of self-consciousness is assumed, almost by fiat, by virtue of which the capacity of truth claims, in the form of judgements, is rendered possible. The argument is again regressive: it sets out to derive the conditions for knowledge of objects from the conditions of self-consciousness, but instead, it ends up merely identifying them, through their arbitrary nomination as 'objective'.

'The Ego ... the crucible and the fire ...'

There is, however, another sense of objectivity that may apply to the analysis of self-consciousness, that is, one that is directly related to self-consciousness and not defined through its relation to an external object. The unity of self-consciousness may be considered as objective, in this sense, as long as it consists only in the 'I think'-consciousness in its relation to every content which can be a thought: it indicates the ability to have the simple consciousness of myself to whatever I represent, regardless of its content. This notion of objectivity (as formal universality and necessity) was demonstrated by Hegel in his critique of Kant:

The Ego is what is originally identical, at one with itself, and utterly at home with itself. If I say 'I', this is the abstract self-relation, and what is posited in this unity is infected by it, and transformed into it. Thus the Ego is, so to speak, the crucible and the fire through which the indifferent multiplicity is consumed and reduced to unity. This, then is what Kant calls 'pure apperception'.¹⁶

We have to bear in mind this sense of objectivity if we are to investigate further the possibility of the Deduction of the Categories, especially with regard to their *a priori* character. However, if this notion is equated with the actual structure of self-consciousness and is hypostatized in terms of a latent 'I', which allegedly underlies and thus unifies all thoughts, we may relapse into the notion of a general, impersonal consciousness, which will again constitute the basis of the 'objective' unity that we previously discussed. Instead, we will try to examine the unity of apperception, not as a unity of thoughts contents effected by a latent, non-transitory 'I', but in terms of the *unification* of the internal states of the self itself, and to use the notion of objectivity pertaining to this process only as the thought of the *formal* dimension of self-consciousness. This mode of employment of the notion of objectivity avoids the recurrent problem of the hypostatisation of

'consciousness in general'. The choice between these two directions depends on the way we read the following critical proposition: 'It must be possible for the "I think" to accompany all my representations' (CPR, B131). If we read it, as Kant suggests, as an analytic judgement and also fix the roles of subject and predicate, the most possible outcome is to understand the notion of 'I think' in terms of an *entity*, which unifies, by means of its formal sameness, all its possible representations as if it were an underlying substratum quite external to them. If we, rather, consider the 'I think' as possibly *being* and possibly *not being* identified with every representation, we may read this statement in a more dynamic way, as the prefix 'it must be *possible*' hints at; that is, that I do not immediately unite all my representations in one 'consciousness in general', but that the 'I think'-consciousness may well *not* accompany all my representations, since it is no longer conceived as a permanent underlying substratum. Instead, the 'I think'-consciousness is inextricably attached to its specific content, and *it can be considered as pure form only as a logical abstraction*. In other words, the above proposition has to be read not as an immediate unity of thoughts under a simple 'I', but as a *reflexive* and moreover, *prescriptive* process: in *each one* of my thoughts *I have to* become conscious of this thought as mine, and so long as I am conscious of a representation, I must also be said to 'apperceive' my *thus* being conscious. Hence, the unity of apperception refers to the necessity of the unification of the infinite 'I think'-consciousness. If previously we read the prefix with the accent on the aspect of possibility, now the stress is on the necessity, that is, it *must* be possible. However, the abstract thought that I can be self-conscious in each of my thoughts, regardless of the concrete content of any particular thought, can exist, and refers to the formal constitution of self-consciousness.

Deduction from the transcendental unity of apperception

We now turn to a more promising interpretation through the detailed examination of the Deduction of the Categories from the notion of the transcendental unity of apperception. In this context, the notions of category, object and experience acquire new meaning and even the task of the deduction is redefined in terms of this new meaning. According to this reading, Kant intends to prove the 'objective validity' of certain rules that prescribe *a priori* a variety of kinds of unity among representations. He intends to prove that without such unity, experience would be impossible. He tries to show that this necessity

(that is, the unity of experience) essentially amounts to the possibility of the existence of a permanent, self-conscious self through time. The unity of the latter is rendered possible only under the unifying activity of the categories, and in this sense the categories are necessary and universal conditions for the possibility of all experience and thus objectively valid. Categories, then, are considered as rules which function *a priori*, that is, universally and necessarily, as unifying operators of experience which render it possible. Kant, however, is not content with this claim. He also asserts that *only* such rules can account for the possibility of experience, otherwise, there can be no notion of experience at all. How can Kant make such a strong claim? As we will try to show, its strength is derived from Kant's severe claims for the identity of the self, since the conditions of the possibility of experience are essentially reduced to the conditions for the establishment of the self-conscious self.

We cite once more the key proposition, this time, in order to read an implicit determination of experience: 'It must be possible, for the I think to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all, and that is equivalent to saying that the representation would be impossible, or at least would be nothing to me' (*CPR*, B131). Here, experience is conceived as being inextricably linked with the self-conscious states of the self, with the taking up of each representation by self-consciousness, the activity of the self upon its own contents as continuous self-affection, and from this point of view, as a continuous process of unification. The latter should not be considered as the bringing of many representations under one consciousness, but as unification of these representations simultaneously with the unification of the infinite 'I think'-consciousness of the self, which includes the former. Kant does not claim that the self first experiences the intuition and then subsumes it under the concept. The only way the 'I think' can accompany its representations is to grasp their manifold at once as unity. In this sense the unity of apperception is not just an analytic unity, as Kant himself misleadingly states (*CPR*, B135), but a synthetic one, since it consists in a unifying process rather than in the tautological connection implied by the statement, 'in so far as all representations are mine they are connected in one consciousness'. The analytic conception of unity cannot account for the necessity of rules, that is, for the necessary connecting relations among the different representations, since the latter would be unified by a simple act of one consciousness (the crucible of the ego).

Kant does not clarify this distinction, thus allowing for the reading that we previously discussed. He generally states that the basic idea of the unity of any experience must be effected by the understanding, which is the only possible active faculty of combining, as opposed to the passive receptivity of sensibility: ‘. . . the unity which the object makes necessary can be nothing else than the formal unity of consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of representations’ (CPR, A105). The following passage, however, provides a new perspective for our inquiry into the nature of the transcendental unity of apperception:

Whatever the origin of our representations is, whether they are due to the influence of outer things, or are produced through inner causes, whether they arise *a priori*, or being appearances have an empirical origin, they must all, as modifications of the mind, belong to *inner sense*. All our knowledge is thus finally subject to time, the formal condition of inner sense. In it they must all be ordered, connected and brought into relation. This is a general observation which, throughout what follows, must be borne in mind as being quite fundamental.

Every intuition contains in itself a manifold which can be represented as a manifold only in so far as the mind distinguishes the time in the sequence of one impression upon another; for each representation in so far as it is contained in a single moment, can never be anything but absolute unity [my emphasis].

(A99)

Kant conceives the diversity as being eventually generated by time, and consequently, its synthesis in turn can occur in temporal terms. Since each representation belongs to inner sense, and is thus subject to time, its taking up by self-consciousness occurs concomitantly in time and accordingly the unity of apperception has to be conceived in terms of the temporality of self-consciousness.

Why, though, should this unity be prescribed according to *a priori* rules? Why could not a unity be effected by custom, habit, by the empirical association of the various representations, *a posteriori*? Why should a ‘transcendental ground’ exist for this unity?

One response could be attained through the recalling of the necessary character of experience, the assumption that if there were not necessarily and universally connected representations, experience would not exist at all, but only ineffable glances. However, if the

answer rests on the definition of experience, the argument becomes regressive as illustrated in the first section. Therefore, the necessity of this kind of unity should not be derived from the definition of experience, which constitutes the result rather than the point of departure for the proof: experience is conceived as being thus united for otherwise there would not exist a permanent self through time. This is the essential point and the core of the whole enterprise of the Deduction: '... only in so far as I can grasp the manifold of the representations in one consciousness, do I call them one and all mine. For otherwise I should have as many-coloured and diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious to myself' (CPR, B132). In other words, each time I am conscious of a representation, I have to become conscious that I am the same self as that which had the former representation. This condition has to be understood only as a *formal* one; for only the formal requirement of the identity of the self can account for the necessitation of the *a priori* nature of the rules. Kant's thought is determined by the notion of identity as absolute and undifferentiated 'sameness' and 'oneness', which can exist only in as far as – as he argues in the 'Paralogisms of Rational Psychology' – there is not the 'least trace of intuition' in the 'I':

That the 'I' of apperception and therefore the 'I' in every act of thought, is *one*, and cannot be resolved into a plurality of subjects, and consequently signifies a logically simple subject, is something already contained in the very concept of thought, and is therefore an analytic proposition. But this does not mean that the thinking 'I' is a simple *substance*. That proposition would be synthetic. The concept of substance always relates to intuitions which cannot in me be other than sensible, and which therefore lie entirely outside the field of the understanding and its thought.

(CPR, B408)

This formal condition – that I have to be one and the same self-conscious subject in each of my thoughts, regardless of the concrete content of each thought – can be prescribed only by *a priori* connections. Only *a priori* rules can guarantee the formal identity of the self for, otherwise, an empirical consciousness would arise, which 'is in itself diverse and without relation to the identity of the subject' (CPR, A120). As already mentioned, Kant is rather obsessed with the notion of the identity of the self as *pure unity*, but since he also wants to radically demarcate himself from the metaphysical tradition – where

the 'I' is identified with the soul that is simple *substance* – he conceives the identity in an entirely *formal* way. In the 'Paralogisms', he also claims:

Consciousness is indeed, that which alone makes all representations to be thoughts, and in it, therefore, as the transcendental subject, all our perceptions must be found; but beyond this logical meaning of the 'I', we have no knowledge of the subject in itself, which as substratum underlies this 'I', as it does all thoughts.

The above extract presents Kant's understanding of the 'I' in terms of a mere logical, empty vehicle of all thoughts. As we have seen, Kant's use of this notion undermines his attempt to deduce the categories for if any such non-transitory empty 'I' pre-existed representation the need for rules would not arise. However, Kant in the Third Paralogism makes space for a formal, though time-determined, notion of numerical identity of the self, which can supply a sufficient ground for the need of both rules – in order to mediate the transitions – and their *a priori* nature as well. He claims, contrary to rational psychology, that from the notion of the self's identity nothing about the knowledge of the personality can be inferred, but only the notion of self-consciousness in time:

For really it says nothing more than that in the whole time in which I am conscious of myself, I am conscious of this time as belonging to the unity of myself; and it comes to the same whether I say that this whole time is in me, as individual unity, or that I am to be found as numerically identical in all this time.

(CPR, A362)

Kant's reference to time has no relation to any empirical, social or historical conceptualisation of it, for these forms imply empirical consciousness and preclude the transcendental construction of the identity of the self. The notion of time is introduced in terms of an *a priori* form of intuition that is compatible with the requirement of the formal identity of the self. Moreover, the transcendental account of time is provided in terms of a linear succession of time units, which is compatible with the requirement of mediating rules for their unification:

We represent the time-sequence by a line progressing to infinity, on which the manifold constitutes a series of one dimension only; and

we reason from the properties of this line to all properties of time, with this one exception, that while the parts of the line are simultaneous the parts of time are always successive.

(CPR, B50)

Therefore, according to the preceding analysis of the notion of the unity of apperception, in a schematic way, the Deduction of the Categories would be achieved as follows:

1. There can exist the thought, as condition, as requirement, that I am one and the same self-conscious self in all of my thoughts, regardless of the concrete content of each thought. This thought refers to the formal structure of self-consciousness and as such determines the nature of the required unity of apperception as *a priori*, that is, universal and necessary and in this sense objective.
2. Nevertheless, the very fact of being conscious in the sense that I can be one and the same self-conscious being in all of my representations, is itself an actual thought, which exists as an instance of the 'I think'-thought, and not as a non-transitory 'I think'. Hence, in every instance of my self-consciousness there is a reference to the totality of all other instances, and it is through this reference that the self's identity may be constituted. From the above, the need for an *ordered transition* of the self from one state to another emerges, so that the *constant formal sameness* and *oneness* of the self may be secured. This type of ordered transition can only be effected by means of universal and necessary rules.
3. The categories, then, are nothing but functions for the co-ordination of all possible 'I think'-instances which render possible the identity of the self and establish its persistence through time. The argument is completed by the confirmation of the unity of the self through its relation to experience, since the synthesising function of the categories is crystallised into an 'object in general' and expressed in the form of judgement (object as that under the concept of which the manifold of an intuition is united).

In brief, the formal unity of the self requires the *a priori* ordering of its representations. This makes experience a coherent, ordered whole in which, in turn, the self recognises its own unity: 'if cinnabar were sometimes red, sometimes black, sometimes light, sometimes heavy, if a man changed sometimes into this and sometimes into that animal form, . . . my empirical imagination would never find opportunity when representing red colour to bring to mind heavy cinnabar' (CPR, A101).

Hence, Kant establishes the 'supreme principle' of all possible employment of the understanding, which is 'that all the manifold of intuition should be subject to conditions of the original synthetic unity of apperception' (CPR, B306).

However, the critical question arises: how can the spontaneous activity of the understanding take the form of *rule* delivering in the first place? Kant needs to resort to a further crucial presupposition, which, however, is never subjected to the need for any sort of deduction. This is the fundamental assumption of the self's *a priori certainty* of its formal identity.

All possible appearances belong, as representations, to the entire possible self-consciousness. From this however, as a transcendental representation, numerical identity is inseparable, and *a priori certain*, since nothing can come into cognition except by means of its original apperception.

(CPR, A113)

For the mind could not possibly think the identity of itself in the multiplicity of its representations, and indeed this *a priori*, if it did not have before its eyes the identity of its action.

(CPR, A96)

However, the *a priori certainty* of the self is never deduced, and thus the limits of the transcendental method appear, as is the case with every transcendental argument, which in order to establish *a priori* knowledge has to regress to another *a priori* assumption.

We are thus provided with a more sophisticated and seemingly consistent argument for the deduction based on the notion of the identity of the self, but we question precisely this notion, and moreover, the ungrounded certainty which is required by virtue of the nature of the required identity. The latter, though, does not deliver Kant's enterprise from consequent internal inconsistencies.

As we have seen, Kant established the supreme principle of the employment of the understanding, according to which any kind of combination of all possible representations should be subject to the categories. The employment of the categories becomes the condition of *all* awareness. Accordingly, even empirical or subjective unity of consciousness – which is a determination of inner sense – should be derived from the original unity of apperception: 'only the original unity is objectively valid; the empirical unity of apperception upon

which we are not here dwelling, and *which besides is merely derived from the former* under given conditions *in concreto*, has only subjective validity' (B140, my emphasis). Kant does not suggest – as he does in the *Prolegomena* – that there is either mere subjective unity of empirical association or objective judgement by means of the employment of the categories. Instead of sharply cutting off the subjective unity from the objective, he considers the former as arising from the latter. How then are we to understand the notion of subjective unity as being 'derivable' from the transcendental unity of apperception? A possible interpretation could run as follows: when I make a claim based on subjective association, for example I conjoin two events as being causally connected according to my subjective judgements of perception, the unity of this claim may be considered to derive from the original unity of apperception in the sense that I make my subjective claim *in terms of causality*. In other words, only because I have in my mind the notion of causality, as a formal rule which *has to order* the manifold, do I ascribe causal connection to the relation between the two representations, regardless of any further specification according to which I can subsume the proper content under the category of causality. But if this is the case, which are the criteria – if they are not the categories whose application is claimed as universal – according to which could we clearly discriminate between subjective and objective claims?

This problem remains irresolvable in the context of the sharp Kantian distinctions between form and content, concept and intuition, truth and illusion. It especially reveals the impasse caused by any notion of category, either as an objectivity-conferring constraint, or as a universal and necessary rule of unification of any manifold of intuition, because both notions are derived from the sharp dichotomy between form and content, according to which objectivity and necessity are ascribed to the former, subjectivity and contingency to the latter.

Furthermore, the requirement of the static, formal identity of the self excludes the possibility of dreams, visions, or any states where the subject does not recognise in them its continuing and absolutely same ego – in fact, states which, as will be seen in following chapters, may lead to even deeper levels of self-consciousness. Instead, according to Kant, these states do not count at all as synthesised representations but as mere ineffable glances, and ultimately as irrational ones; the formal unity of the self excludes the possibility of any sense of break, loss or change of its pure abiding identity.

However, the deduction from the unity of apperception provides a serious contribution to the notion of self-consciousness, which consists

in the conception of self-consciousness as a *mediated* and *conditioned* process, as opposed to the Cartesian revelation of the ego through the exclusive introspection of inner sense. The unity of self-consciousness is not conceived as pre-existing or utterly acquired by the *cogito*, but can be achieved only through the mediation of the synthetic activity of the understanding, the recognition of a coherent experience which reconfirms the unity of the self. Self-consciousness is constructed through a continuing self-mirroring to its 'objects in general'. The *a priori certainty* of the self's identity can be actualised only through the mediating synthesis of the self's representations. However, this notion of mediation is too weak and elementary and in fact is spurious. For, the issue of the relation between subject and object in Kant is eventually internalised within the self, between its two faculties – understanding and receptivity – where the former ultimately determines the latter. The mediation of self-consciousness is then a play between the 'selves' within the same self, the transcendental and the phenomenal one, as in the practical philosophy between the noumenon and the phenomenal ego. One could object that in critical philosophy empirical realism is a permanent feature and that Kant systematically tries to avoid any solipsistic reduction of empirical reality to the products of consciousness. The 'Refutation of Idealism' section is indicative. This may well be the case, but so long as empirical realism has no consistent relation with Kant's arguments in the deduction, especially with regard to the role of the understanding and its relation to intuition, it ends up as a mere assertion: empirical realism is ultimately equated with the assumption of the 'things in themselves', and, consequently, does not essentially intervene in the understanding–intuition relation, despite Kant's permanent efforts to incorporate empirical reality in his cognitive enterprise and render legitimate – by delineating the limits – the concepts of the understanding.

The following examination of the nature of this mediation and its consequences for the deduction will elucidate the above considerations.

The spurious mediation

So far, we have seen how Kant established the supreme principle of the understanding. However, in section 21(*CPR*), he claims that only a beginning to the deduction is made. Hence he states:

In what follows (§26) it will be shown, from the mode in which the empirical intuition is given in sensibility, that its unity is no other

than that which the category (according to §20) prescribes to the manifold of a given intuition in general. Only thus, by demonstration of the *a priori* validity of the categories in respect of all objects of our senses, will the purpose of the deduction be fully attained.

(CPR, B145)

However, the remaining task for the completion of the deduction is not as stated above,⁷ that is, the applicability of the categories to *all* objects, that is, their universal and unrestricted validity. The latter has already been proved by the claim on the use of the categories as necessary conditions of the persistence of the self in time. For the requirement of the unity of the self necessitates the unity of all possible representations of the self, and from this point of view, the categories have to be applicable to any manifold which may possibly count as experience. Instead, the remaining task for the Deduction demands that the categories be actually capable of taking up the 'given' into the unity of apperception; that the entire manifold not only *should* be subject to *the original unity of apperception*, but also, *can* be so. In other words, that there is no possibility for the case that: 'Appearances might very well be so constituted that the understanding should not find them to be in accordance with the conditions of its unity' (CPR, B123). Hence, by means of this second step, Kant intends to prove that the applicability of the categories is not only a condition for the possibility of experience, but also an actuality which makes systematic knowledge of experience and self-consciousness possible. This crucial and indispensable step, however, is proved in such a way that it further undermines the legitimate use of the concepts of the understanding.

Kant says that up to this stage of the deduction he had abstracted from the proof the *mode* in which the manifold is given and paid attention *solely* to the unity of the understanding. He will now try to prove that the *entire* manifold can be taken up by the categories and that its unity is no other than that prescribed by them, precisely by virtue of the mode in which this manifold is given. He transfers the centre of gravity of the deduction from the necessity of the unification of the given, to the givenness itself which allows for this unity. He completes the deduction by proving that there would not exist intuitions that would fail to conform to the categories due to the mode of their 'givenness' in space and time. The following footnote is quite illuminating:

Space, represented as object, contains more than mere *form* of intuition; it also contains combination of the manifold, given according

to the form of sensibility, in an intuitive representation, so that the *form* of intuition gives only a manifold, the *formal* intuition gives unity of representations.

In the Aesthetic I have treated this unity as belonging merely to sensibility, simply in order to emphasise that it precedes any concept, although, as a matter of fact, it *presupposes a synthesis which does not belong to the senses* but through which all concepts of space and time first become possible [my emphasis]. For since by its means (in that *the understanding determines the sensibility*) [my emphasis], space and time are first given as intuition. . . .

(CPR, B n. 161)

Deciphering this obscure and dense passage, we can make the following remarks: the mode of givenness which renders all intuitions conformable to the categories, relies on the assumptions that: (a) all intuitions belong to the *a priori* framework of space and time (*form* of intuition), and, consequently, their form can be conformable to *a priori* rules; (b) space and time themselves, thus everything which is intuited in their terms, presuppose a synthesis which is determined by the understanding (*formal* intuition). Kant, in trying to show the possible way through which given intuitions are conceptualisable, claims that conceptual conformity to the intuitional conditions of human sensibility itself presupposes their minimal conceptualisation (not in temporal but in epistemological terms). Hence, he refutes his own dichotomies between the strict roles of spontaneity and receptivity, concept and intuition, thereby radically relativising the notion of the object. If Kant claimed that Locke sensualised concepts and Leibniz idealised intuitions, he himself seems to be trapped by a similar way of bridging the dichotomies that he himself has created.

Hence, the understanding that was supposed to be conditioned by sensibility ends up itself conditioning and determining its 'other'. Self-consciousness is supposed to be mediated by its experience, but the latter, precisely because it is exclusively *its* experience, renders the mediation 'spurious' and finally always remains alien to both – real but unknowable – world and ego.

From the previous inquiry into the attempt of the Deduction of the Categories, we can trace, regardless of the degree of success of the Deduction *per se*, the formulation of the main features of the conceptual-representational mode of thinking and of transcendental logic.

1. Conceptual thinking proceeds from the assumption of an external manifold which stands opposed to the subject of knowledge. This

manifold is conceived as the passive material which is immediately given to the subject. However, it seems that nothing breaks immediately into the subject. The manifold is given to the subject through the subject's faculty of receptivity. The immediacy of the material is mediated through the *a priori* conditions of sensibility, namely, time and space, and becomes, from mere presentation, *representation*.

2. The characterisation of time as an *a priori* form of intuition essentially indicates the *finiteness* of the human mind, in the sense that all possible sensible representations of outer and inner sense are eventually subject to inner sense, which appears to function as the sieve through which the world is filtered by the faculty of *a priori* sensibility. As such, time pertains only to the mode of givenness, or to the conditions of receptivity, which is conceived in entirely passive terms. Time is associated with the structural limitations of human sensibility and thus only with the concept of *human* finitude. Moreover, this conception of time takes on a more specific meaning. It acquires the structural form of the mind that conditions it to intuit every possible sensual material as continuous, infinite, successive, isolated units, given in a linear mode. Through this conceptualisation of time, we identify a second basic element of conceptual thinking, namely, that it proceeds through the path of thorough analytical distinctions in terms of precise temporal determinations. These analytically distinguished sensible elements, in turn, lie in need of synthesis, if they intend to constitute objects of knowledge. This conceptualisation of time proves to be the key mediating form, through which self-consciousness is perceived as a process of unification. The temporal dimension of self-consciousness is a fruitful contribution. However, time stands for an *a priori form of intuition*, and therefore is not associated with the spontaneity of concepts themselves. In addition, the confinement of time exclusively to the domain of the finitude of human receptivity does not imply that the latter should be specified in the form of a linear succession of isolated representations. It seems that the Kantian *concept* of time, which claims *a priori* status, rather reflects the predominant seventeenth-century scientific conceptualisation of time. The restriction of the concept of time to the conditions of sensibility, fixes a rigid separation between the finite nature of sensual representations – which are subject to temporality – and the infinite nature of the concepts of the understanding – which spring spontaneously out of time. Time and eternity appear to pertain to two sharply distinct realms. The highly modern conceptualisation of time, then, paradoxically reintroduces the old distinction of a *traditional* mythological pattern of thinking

between the temporal and the eternal, the profane and the sacred, in the modern forms of the dichotomy between phenomenal knowledge and faith, sensuality and moral autonomy.

The essential contribution of Kant's enterprise is the establishment of the problematic of self-consciousness in terms of time and mediation. He thereby introduces the possibility of a rupture with both the asocial, ahistorical Cartesian and the empiricist models of self-awareness. However, the limitations of this problematic of self-consciousness, which derive from its restriction within the realm of a transcendental conceptualisation of time, suggest the need for a further rupture with precisely this way of conceptualising time and the concomitant model of self-consciousness in terms of formal identity.

3. The above analytically distinguished sensible representations lie in need of synthesis. The latter is an act of *spontaneity*, performed by the faculty of understanding, which is considered as a pure self-legislating activity. Understanding, by means of the spontaneous production of laws, transforms the fragmented sensible representations into a coherent, rule-governed unity; into objects of experience. The concepts of understanding, as they ground the 'land of truth', are required to prove their right to employment. They have to be legitimate, otherwise their use would lead to illusions, paralogisms and antinomies, as the illegitimate use of Reason does whenever the latter transcends the bounds of experience and seeks the unconditioned. This, however, belongs to faith, not to knowledge. Only the conditioned use of the understanding within the limits of experience could be justifiable: only a legal contract between the understanding and the senses would render the former legitimate. Nevertheless, this contract ultimately amounts, after a long journey in the realm of appearances, to the conditions for the existence of the self-conscious, persistent-in-time self.

The self can secure its unity only so long as its representations and corresponding states can be synthesised in an *a priori* way. However, these representations are already *inwardly determined* by the understanding: the legal contract turns into the domination of the understanding upon the sensibility. The requirement for the formal unity of the self is none other than that which pertains to the assurance of the bearer of the faculty of the understanding. Therefore, the understanding eventually acquires its right to use its concepts by virtue of the requirement of its own assumption. This striking contradiction is but the result of the transcendental method itself; a method that pursues the validation of the faculties of Reason as autonomous and so *a priori*. A faculty thus considered is one that finds its law in itself and at the

same time, because of its self-legislating nature, has to judge itself in order to legitimise – that is, to ascribe universal validity – its own right to legislate – which is particular.⁸ The reduction of the ‘enchanted land of truth’ to the ‘mere play of our representations’ is then an unconfessed acceptance of this antinomy by Kant himself.

Hence, in the context of transcendental logic, spontaneity is specified as a rule-giving activity and experience is confined to the representations that are taken up by the formally identical self. Experience is the unity through which the self confirms its identity, and from this point of view, experience is essentially conceived in terms of the conditions for self-affirmation and thereby of property relations.

4. In Kant's conceptual thinking the world is turned into a *representation* of the subject. The latter not only implies a dualistic separation between subject and object, but also the suggestion that, in this relation, only the subject is active, while the object assumes a passive, lifeless character. In fact, this distinction is replicated within the subject itself in the form of the internal distribution of active and passive roles for the understanding and sensibility respectively, and the predominance of the former over the latter. The representational account of experience derives not only from Kant's dualism, but also from his restricted conception of spontaneity. The latter pertains only to the faculty of the understanding and indeed is conceived as a rule-giving activity. Moreover, spontaneity is eventually reduced to a logical concept. Transcendental logic essentially claims its right to engulf experience, but so long as this claim is based on the self-legislative character of spontaneity, the objectivity of representations is transformed into a mere play, and the legislator into an impotent subject, confronting the realm of noumena where its laws have no authority.

Hence, we can hardly see in Kant's resort to the understanding's self-legislative spontaneity, a claim for the establishment of the notion of the *absolute* subject, as Heidegger suggests.⁹ Rather, we recognise here Kant's attempt to construct a notion of the self's identity that intends to protect it from its severe limitations – namely its paralogisms and antinomies – whenever it engages with the paradoxes of the cosmos. It is not the subject but its limitations that appear as absolute, and these appear so, due to the role that is ascribed to the subject's spontaneity, that is, lawgiving. The main problem does not consist in the resorting to the spontaneity of the understanding, but in the confinement of spontaneity to the domain of transcendental logic.

Kant's response to his central question on the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgements is provided by the conceptualisation of experience as a transparent and orderly unified whole and, simultaneously, by the acknowledgement of the radical limitations of this notion, since it pertains only to the realm of phenomena. Cognitive experience is conceived at once as formally transparent and impenetrably opaque. This is an aporetic account of experience, where aporia is intended to be solved and yet – ironically by virtue of its solution – becomes fixed and static.

2

From Determinant to Reflective Judgement: the Normalisation of Experience

In the previous chapter, we examined Kant's response to his main question on the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgements. The necessity and universality of the latter have been deduced by virtue of the requirement of the formal identity of the self through time. This type of identity, in turn, can be attained by means of the synthetic activity of the understanding, which spontaneously generates the universal and necessary unifying rules. Synthesis is carried through the lawgiving spontaneity of the understanding. However, the laws, which understanding prescribes for nature, do not exhaust the multiplicity and infinite variety of the particular relations that abound in experience. These also need to be lawfully organised if experience is still intended to be considered orderly unified. The lawfulness of the particular arises as the new problem, and indeed in terms of its compatibility with the laws of the understanding, for otherwise the identity of the self would be suspended by the lawless irruption of the particular. The difficult task for the resolution of this problem is now assigned to a new type of synthetic judgement, the reflective judgement, which starting from the particular, is called to find its law so that it be commensurate with the laws of the understanding. According to Kant, if this aim is met, a feeling of pleasure emerges in the subject: 'The attainment of every aim is coupled with a feeling of pleasure' (*CJ*, section 10). Hence, the central question of the possibility of synthetic judgements arises anew, in the form:

How is a judgement possible which, going merely upon the individual's *own* feeling of pleasure in an object independent of the concept of it, estimates this as a pleasure attached to the representation of the same object in *every other individual*, and does so, i.e.,

without being allowed to wait and see if other people will be of the same mind?

(*CJ*, section 36, 288)

Reflective judgement lies in need of deducing its claims. However, since the former is not carried through the concepts of the understanding, what is the bearer of synthesis, or rather how is synthesis now conceived, and on what ground are the results of this synthetic activity conceived as universal and necessary?

As a preliminary remark, we would like to emphasise that synthesis now is introduced in terms of *feeling*, and indeed as one of pleasure, which for Kant usually pertains to the empirical rather than to the conceptual realm. Moreover, synthetic unity is associated with the innovative conception of *free play*, occurring between the interactive parts – understanding and imagination – in the reflective procedure. This approach endows reflective judgement with new dynamic features, which may potentially break Kant's transcendental standpoint and open new insights into the notion of experience and the relation between man and the world. However, as far as the free play pertains exclusively to the subjective cognitive powers, reflective judgement is conceived as a *syn-thetic* act, and its promising dynamism is absorbed by the *positing* principles of Reason. Yet, reflective judgement is characterised by an internal tension, which, despite Kant's ultimate determination to resolve it, it is worthwhile considering.

In fact, the tension of reflective judgement originates in the unresolved aporias of determinant judgement. These are not traced in the concept of the identity of the self, since this seems to constitute an unquestionable condition of experience in Kant's problematic. The aporias are associated with the faculty of judgement itself, with our ability to judge at all, namely, to think the particular as contained under the universal.

In the First Critique, Kant argues that, in fact, there can exist no further rule that would instruct judgement on how to subsume a particular under a rule:

If it [general logic] sought to give general instructions how we are to subsume under these rules, that is, to distinguish whether something does or does not come under them, that could only be by means of another rule. This in turn, for the very reason it is a rule, again demands guidance from judgement. Thus, it appears that, though understanding is capable of being instructed, and of being equipped with rules, judgement is a peculiar talent, which can be

practised only, and cannot be taught. It is the specific quality of so-called mother-wit; and its lack no school can make good.

(CPR, A133, B172)

There is not only a logical problem of infinite regress implied in these rules but also a problem with the very act of the determinant judgement itself, that is, the subsumption of particulars under pre-existing, rigid and formal universals. However, while natural talent cannot be taught, and for its lack 'there is no remedy . . . transcendental philosophy has the peculiarity that besides the rules (or rather the universal conditions of rules), which are given in the pure concepts of the understanding, it can also specify the *instance* to which the rule is to be applied' (B175, my emphasis). It is the Analytic of Principles, the Schematism and the System of the Principles of pure understanding, under the common title, the Transcendental Doctrine of Judgement, which will provide the *canon* for judgement.

In this section, Kant attempts to solve the problem of judging power, but in fact only specifies the terms of the subsumption of the particulars under the universal, without actually addressing the issue of the instance of the subsumption, namely, the problem of how *this* particular could be subsumed under a given concept. The Schematism merely attempts to give a plausible exposition of the way in which a pure intelligible concept can apply to an entirely sensible intuition, that is, how these entirely heterogeneous entities could be united. The answer to this enigma is given by the notion of time, the pure intuition that is claimed to be homogeneous with both concept and intuition. The schema is a formal determination of time provided by the productive imagination, according to the demands of the understanding. It is therefore a method, a rule in terms of time, and not an image, as M. Heidegger and H. Arendt have argued.¹

An 'image version' of the schema would be a universal, determining, substantial *eikon* of the particular, which would allow for a Platonic *eikastic* reading of the Kantian concept, leaving out his *formalist* methodology which is central to the whole critical project. In fact, the whole enterprise of the Deduction of the Categories is based on Kant's formalism, particularly as regards the requirement of the unity of the original apperception as the exigency for the formal identity of the subject. On Arendt's reading, taking the schema to be a substantial image, there could not exist any organisation and unification of the manifold under rules, but merely the recognition of a 'faint copy' in its perfect *eikon*.

The conceptualisation of the schema as given by the productive imagination and as partaking in the rules for the subsumption of the manifold, can be properly understood by a consideration of the relationship between imagination and understanding in the *CPR*.

In the 'A' deduction we read:

A pure imagination, which conditions all *a priori* knowledge, is thus one of the fundamental faculties of the human soul. By its means we bring the manifold of intuition on the one side, into connection with the condition of the necessary unity of pure apperception on the other.

(A124)

Imagination (we are mainly concerned with the productive) appears as a mediating faculty between intuition and concept that belongs either to sensibility or understanding.

Imagination is the faculty of representing in intuition an object that is *not itself present*. Now since all our intuition is sensible, the imagination, owing to the subjective condition under which alone it can give to the concepts of understanding a corresponding intuition, belongs to *sensibility*. But inasmuch as its synthesis is an expression of spontaneity . . . , and which is therefore able to determine sense *a priori* in respect of its form in accordance with the unity of apperception, imagination is to that extent a faculty which determines the sensibility; and its synthesis of intuitions, conforming as it does to the *categories*, must be the transcendental synthesis of *imagination*. This synthesis is an action of the *understanding* [my emphasis] on the sensibility.

(B152)

Here, imagination seems to hold an equivocal status between sensibility and understanding, similar to that of time, which is assumed to pertain to both concept and intuition. However, this twofold nature does not address the pressing question of the applicability of the universal upon the particular, in so far as the latter pertains to the empirical realm. The same confusion appears concerning the various definitions of inner sense, which on the one hand is associated with mere subjective or empirical representations and on the other with forms of intuition, as the site of time.

The tension which accompanies determinant judgement with regard to the applicability of its concepts, is deflated through resource to the

'solution' of the schematism. In the latter, though, the twofold status of imagination and time loses its transitive, mediating role between universal and particular, concept and intuition, as imagination is eventually restricted to the subjective sphere. This becomes more obvious by briefly looking at the nature of imagination's activity. In the *CPR*, imagination appears responsible for two crucial functions: the figurative synthesis, and the production of the schema. The figurative synthesis concerns the synthesis of the manifold of sensible intuition, which constitutes what Kant names formal intuition. It is a unity that belongs to space and time, and from this point of view, hangs on the sensible aspect of imagination, but is determined by the understanding (B151, B153, B161, note 1). The schema is a transcendental product of imagination that enables the application of the concepts of the understanding to the already synthesised formal intuition. Therefore, in both activities, imagination works under the tutelage of the understanding, in order to enable the latter's subsumptive action. Imagination's creativity is restricted to the possible ways of bridging the gap between sensibility and understanding, under the latter's authority. In this context, imagination plays a secondary role to that of the understanding, and its activity is in fact only an extension of the understanding's power.

Schematism thematises the riddle of judgement power and despite its claims on its solution by means of time, the unresolved tension between universal and particular recurs through the perplexity of reflective judgement.

In search of a principle of judgement

Despite Kant's attempt to elaborate through the transcendental doctrine of judgement, 'the conditions under which objects can be given in harmony with these concepts' (B174), and thus to answer the riddle of the capacity to judge (*Urteilkraft*), the mystery remains unsolved. 'This schematism of our understanding . . . is an art concealed in the depths of the human soul, whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover, and to have open to our gaze' (B180). In the *CJ*, Kant confesses that the very nature of judgement itself entails that 'the discovery of a principle peculiar to judgement . . . must be a task involving considerable difficulties'. Yet, 'a critique of pure reason, i.e., of our power of judging on *principles*, would be incomplete if the ability to judge, which is a cognitive ability, and as

such lays claim to independent principles, were not dealt with in its own right', and so 'the critical search for a principle of judgement . . . is the most important in a critique of this faculty' (*CJ* 174). Indeed, the Third Critique does not deal with the exposition of cognitive, moral or aesthetic judgements; rather the judging-power itself reflects upon itself, and becomes reflective.

There is a tendency among most of the commentators on the *CJ* to rush to give solutions to the aporias of the judging-power, confining their readings to the search for a principle, and thus to the transcendental realm. The organisation of the Third Critique, indeed, suggests this reading, but an exclusive concentration on the remarks in the Introduction leads to a lack of consideration of the internal contradictions of Kant's procedure. Consequently, there is often little identification of the points in Kant's – often perplexing – ramblings in search of a principle of the judging-power, where he exceeds his own analytical distinctions. Thus the problematising of the transcendental area itself in the Third Critique, and the new, yet incomplete, and often self-contradictory, dynamism that is here introduced into the critical project, remain undertheorised. Accordingly, D. Bell argues that in the *CJ* we find Kant's solution to the aporia of judgement.² The latter consists in 'our ability to enjoy a spontaneous, criterialess, disinterested, presumptively universal, non-cognitive, reflective feeling that certain diverse elements of experience *as such* belong together, and that they comprise an intrinsically satisfying whole in virtue of their seeming to have a point'.³ The origin and expression of this feeling are our spontaneous and primordial 'feeling at home in nature'. 'This is the principle of nature's formal finality for our cognitive faculties in its particular (empirical) laws – a principle without which understanding could not feel itself at home in nature' (*CJ* 193/5). According to the same commentator, the riddle of judgement is solved by such a direct awareness of an intrinsic coherence, a primordial, innate feeling at home in nature that is the subjective condition for the possibility of objective knowledge. Without this feeling, phenomena would be problematic and opaque. Bell presents an instantiation of this feeling as follows:

As I walk into the gallery, my attention is caught by a particularly large canvas, a work of abstract expressionism, a Jackson Pollock, for example. I walk over and stand before it . . . , and look. But it remains stubbornly problematic, obstinately refusing to yield whatever sense it may have. . . . I persist, however, and after a while I begin to find a pleasure in the painting that causes me to smile: it

has begun to work for me – on me. And in the pleasure I feel in contemplating it, I approach, I believe, as closely as I know how to an exclusively *aesthetic* response. . . . [This response] is a feeling . . . , an immensely complex one, and involves the feeling that the whole has an integrity, a *point*.⁴

In other words, the solution to the mystery of judgement is revealed in the aesthetic response, by dint of our primordial familiarity with the world which enables us to have an immediate awareness of unity, to make sense of the unstructured manifold of the world. Thereby, the notion of finality is *hypostatized* as an immediate personal awareness of our harmony with the world, or as the supersensible *substratum* of humanity. Bell's approach though, misses the *prescriptive* character of the notion of finality, and the concomitant cultural connotations of the term in a manner similar as that of the hypostatized conception of the notion of 'consciousness in general', which, as discussed in the first chapter, misses the *formal* character of the *transcendental unity of apperception* and its temporal determinations.⁵

Kant, indeed, gives a crucial importance to the principle of finality, and is principally concerned with the eventual integration of his whole search within the transcendental field. However, this is not to be taken as the end of the story, for, even in the Introduction, a few lines below the statement of this principle, he says:

[But] the transcendental principle, by which a finality of nature, in its subjective response to our cognitive faculties, is represented in the form of a thing as a principle of its estimation, leaves quite undetermined the question of where and in what cases we have to make our estimate of the object as a product according to a principle of finality, instead of simply according to universal laws of nature. It resigns to the *aesthetic* judgement the task of *deciding* the conformity of this product (in its form) to our cognitive faculties as a question of taste (a matter which the aesthetic judgement decides, not by any harmony with concepts, but by feeling).

(CJ, p. 35)

Thus, it is within the aesthetic judgement's procedure of decision that its rich and creative activity is unfolded, along with its social and cultural presuppositions, which together show that the judging-power cannot be so easily exhausted in the assumption of its hypostatized primordality.

Understanding and orientation towards the world

We propose to set up the investigation of reflective judgement by accepting, initially, a more 'open' conception of finality, in the sense that it does not exhaust the search for the judgement's art in its primordial breath. Kant, in introducing finality as the principle of the judging-faculty, points out that judgement, according to this principle, does not legislate for any realm at all, but only for itself. Finality is a regulative, and not a constitutive principle.

This is an implicit avowal of the inadequacy of the legislative activity of the subject upon the world. The principle of finality guides only the subject's attitude. It gives the subject the confidence to come to grips with the world. In this sense, finality is like the remains of the self's old pride, rather than the source of the laws that would construct the world out of the understanding's certainty. However, there is still a *certainty* about the world's pre-adaptation to the subject's cognitive faculties. Now, though, it appears more as a primary assumption about the familiarity of the world, so that the subject orients itself towards it in order to investigate and to explain it through its particularities, rather than imposing its own self-certain structural complexes on it.

We can provisionally assume the notion of finality as a positive disposition of the subject towards the world, which as such enables its actual interaction with it. This is again a subject-centred assumption which, however, being at a minimal and regulative level, has its role restricted to the stimulation of an *orientation* of the subject towards the world. It is an assumption that carries with it the presupposition of a break in the subject's interiority, and a retreat from a self-complacent inwardness, which may enable us to explore the potential of reflective judgement.⁶

The type of aesthetic response which allows a feeling for the depth of the world, however, is not due to the *status* of the reflective judgement, but, rather, comes about because of a non-authoritative concern for the world, an *interest* in the particular, and an interaction with it. Aesthetic judgement, as Kant has expounded it, is concerned with the singular, with the disclosure of new deeper aspects of the world. The experience of the beautiful breaks through the quotidian in the sense that it silences our familiar – that is, by means of conventional categories – view of the world, and evokes in our subjectivity an abundance of thoughts and images which do not solidify into a single perspective, but seem to present ever new facets of the world.

The activity of judging

Kant, by addressing the issue of the judgement of taste in the *CJ*, faces the problem of judging the particular, which opens new avenues for dealing with the riddle of the judging-power. His answers oscillate between a powerful undermining of the understanding's authority, and an attempt to restore its status. Kant both abolishes the concept and keeps it in an indeterminate form. It is the understanding now which is subject to the imagination, but imagination still *schematises* without a concept (A287). This equivocation has led to a variety of different kinds of readings, which can roughly be distinguished between those which keep the Third Critique exclusively in the transcendental sphere, and those which stress the exceeding of the transcendental realm, leaving aside the foundation of Kant's enterprise on a *principle*. Both readings are justifiable and consistent with various sections of the text. Here, we will examine to what extent Kant really exceeds the transcendental realm, and to what degree the limits of his enterprise are dependent on his simultaneous establishment and undermining of the foundational principle of the aesthetic judgement.

It has often been argued that the basic distinction between determinate and reflective judgement is that the former is mediated by concepts, while the latter – due to the absence of concepts – is immediate and spontaneous.⁷ We will see that the distinction is much more complex, and in fact, as regards their mediate nature, the case may be even the opposite. This has to do with the relation between understanding and imagination which, as we already saw in the determinant judgement, leads to a rather spurious notion of the mediate nature of that form of judgement, where the latter appears as a mere extension of the understanding's activity. Reflective judgement arises out of the formative activity of the imagination in its interaction with the understanding and as such has both a mediate and immediate nature.

In the *Analytic of the Beautiful*, judgements of taste are characterised by relating them to the four general logical functions of judgement, that is, quality, quantity, relation and modality. Each of the four highlights an aspect of the pleasure that is peculiar to aesthetic judgement. At the outset of the First Moment, Kant remarks, 'if we wish to discern if anything is beautiful or not, we do not refer the representation of it to the object by means of imagination (acting, perhaps, in conjunction with the understanding)' (*CJ* 203). Reflective judgement is thus intimately concerned with imagination, and thereby a new role will be given to it. The negative determinations of the judgement of taste with

regard to the four moments of its possible determination, also illustrate the degradation of the role of the understanding. The exclusion of judgement's conceptual subsumption does not imply its sheer immediacy, but only the implicit avowal of the inadequacy of the methodology of the schematism. Here, Kant reveals a structure of judgement which is not only prior (both epistemologically and temporally, as has been argued) to any determination by the categories, *but also one which could not accommodate concepts as they have been defined in the First Critique*. Nevertheless, Kant insists on the need for a kind of concept (CJ 207), even an indeterminate one. This insistence, and its implications, which are more obvious in the Deduction and the Solution of the Antinomy of Taste, informs a discrepancy between the Analytic and the rest of the text on the aesthetic. Hence, it will be seen that while Kant in his search for a principle of the judging-power actually does exceed his transcendental field, he eventually retreats back to it.

In the Analytic of the Beautiful, Kant sets out to explore 'a new mode of judging', a 'quite separate faculty of discriminating and estimating' which is not based on the application of concepts, but on the feeling of pleasure and displeasure (CJ 204). The heart of this new mode of judging consists in the unfolding of imagination's activity in its *free interplay* with the understanding. Imagination is identified as 'our power of intuitions' (CJ 292), or as equivalent to our 'power of sensibility' (CJ 354). The important point here is the convergence of intuition and imagination, and the latter's gaining a much more independent and autonomous status than it had in the First Critique. In the imagination's activity, we also see a new role for intuition. Imagination, in its free interplay with the understanding, differentiates and discriminates the manifold; it moulds its own forms for its own pleasure,⁸ and not under the command of the understanding. It is no longer the working of an active understanding upon the passive material of sensibility, but intuition producing its own possible configuration out of the manifold. However, the feeling of pleasure, which occurs in this free movement of interplay, arises only when imagination settles the proportion of the manifold that brings about a harmony with the understanding. This stage is called *common sense* (CJ 238).

What is the meaning of this balance, this harmonious conformity of the imagination with the understanding? A preliminary answer is that imagination has arranged the manifold in such a way that the understanding is satisfied with the unification of the manifold by means of the attainment of its *optimum ratio*. The latter, though, has been

effected without the use of understanding's concepts. If this is the case, in what sense can the understanding be satisfied with imagination's activity? In what sense does imagination show conformity with the understanding, since the latter does not subsume it under its usual restrictions? The understanding is usually satisfied when it discovers the invariant homogeneous features that are shared by different manifold configurations. It can then classify them according to its rules, leaving aside any particularities and assuming authority over the imagination. However, this does not seem to hold in this case. Understanding is now satisfied by virtue of the achievement of an alternative unity, *a unity of play*. This is not a unity achieved by the external application of concepts, a mutilation of the particular for the sake of homogeneity. Rather, it is a unity emerging from a playful interaction between the two faculties, in which neither assumes a predominant role. It seems, then, that unity results by means of an internal self-sustenance of the manifold which comes about through the manner of its formation in its active interplay with the understanding, that is, through the playful interaction among the different parts, which together constitute a whole displaying a transitive order. It is a unity that preserves the particular, and indeed it is based on it. This unity can mainly be felt; it is a 'feeling which the subject has of itself' and, 'what is more, [is referred to] its feeling of life – under the name of pleasure or displeasure' (CJ 204). The pleasure in turn involves a turning towards the subject. We come in touch with 'the entire faculty of representations, of which the mind is conscious in the feeling of its state' (CJ 204). The feeling is of the vitality of our cognitive powers, and the unity is one whose order is that of life. Here, pleasure is linked to the feeling of life and life to the feeling of play.⁹ In reflective judgement, therefore, as also in the determinant, the unity of the subject is revealed. However, the subject now, being liberated from its imperative need to organise and appropriate the world according to its determinant categories, appears relaxed and playful, able to feel pleasure and discover the feeling of life in it. Hence, its unity is now conceived in terms of the unity of life – though the latter is conceived as *harmony* of internal diversity – as opposed to the abstract, absolute and undifferentiated unity of the formal identity of the subject in the First Critique.

In the General Remark to the first section of the *Analytic of the Beautiful*, Kant makes explicit the nature of the proportion that occurs in the aesthetic judgement. He contrasts it with the static uniformity obtained by the application of concepts with which – beyond the satisfaction of cognitive or practical ends – we 'grow tired' as 'all stiff

regularity is inherently repugnant to taste'. Instead, the proportion achieved in the judgement of taste, where productive imagination works, as the 'originator of arbitrary forms of possible intuition' looks dynamic, movable, of 'quite irregular beauty . . . subject to no constraint or artificial rules', as when 'we watch the changing shapes of the fire' (*CJ* 242). In this new kind of order, imagination's freedom can be simultaneously reconciled with its conformity to law, which now arises from the dynamic of the mutual interaction, rather than from an act of subordination. Understanding may be puzzled by this flagrant contradiction (*CJ* 241), nevertheless it is satisfied because the harmony with the imagination is there achieved, and the condition met for the possibility of judgement.

The achieved accord between understanding and intuition is not like that achieved in the Copernican revolution, where intuition was taken up by the understanding, but is rather closer to its opposite, in that intuition is the active element, unfolding in its self-orienting activity in order to meet the understanding. In fact, the universal is never 'there', cut off from the particular, but it is, rather, always inherent in it. Understanding's satisfaction, therefore, cannot come from the potential application of its categories. This is the case not only because of the nature of the proportion which resists all levelling, but also for the simple reason that if this were the case, every single object of possible knowledge would be judged as beautiful. However, if understanding is satisfied with this kind of unity, then this anticipates a new conception of the notion of cognition as well. This might be the meaning of 'cognition in general', implying a more holistic and dynamic notion of cognition than that achieved by the rigid alignment of intuitions with concepts. Indeed, it implies a cognition that might be attained by means of both feeling and reflection – beyond categorical synthesis – by means of a playful interaction with the world, in which the subject appears freed from its 'convulsive self-importance' and combines cognition with pleasure.

The structure of reflective judgement also anticipates a different notion of time, inherent in it. In the First Critique, the particular (not distinct from the individual) was conceived as 'nothing but *absolute unity*', in so far as it was 'contained in a single moment' and its unification with the other particulars was achieved by external categorical synthesis that unified temporal moments as well. Now, the particular is no longer taken as an absolute unity, as the Leibnizian legacy bequeathed to Kant in the First Critique. Instead, it gains a rather 'organic' nature, being in connection with other parts thus forming a

whole that is sustained through them, and no longer stands opposed to them. In turn, this could contribute to another conceptualisation of time, which might no longer be conceived as a continuous linearity of successive moments, but as the expression of a process, in which every moment already contains its past and anticipates its future, and yet it may arise unexpectedly, by a sudden interruption of the continuity of the process, as the unpredictable moment of the attainment of the balance invokes. In this case, as Lyotard claims, there would not really be any temporal synthesis in the aesthetic judgement. However, this by no means leads to his contention that for this reason there is no subjectivity, but merely the dazzling immediacy of a 'pure feeling that promises a subject'.¹⁰ In the aesthetic response, we might not have the 'I think' which accompanies each representation, but we do have the emergence of a more vital and substantive subjectivity. Aesthetic judgement involves reflexivity and self-awareness of one's feeling of pleasure or displeasure. The lack of the categorial, temporal synthesis does not imply the absence of any synthesis at all. There is *another kind* of synthesis, due to the interactive activity of the imagination and the understanding, which allows a subjectivity in a fuller and more complex manner through its correlation with life and the world. It is a synthesis arising out of play.¹¹

***Sensus communis*, culture, humanism**

Reflective judgement, however, claims universality and necessity. Despite its wanderings, it eventually has to conform to the laws of the understanding and thereby to resolve its antinomies. This task is carried out in the section on the Deduction of the aesthetic judgement. It has been argued that to the extent that we do not follow a traditional reading of the Third Critique (that is, waiting for the Deduction to prove what was built up in the Analytic), but read it as the exploration of the riddle of the art of judgement, we should put less weight on the Deduction as a foundational element.¹² Indeed, the Deduction as such, that is the procedure of proving the legitimacy of using the judgement that was built up in the Analytic, concerns the legitimacy of *logical* properties, that is, universality and necessity, and marks the exit point for the *quaestio quid juris*. The procedure of the Deduction itself confers legitimacy, and makes the judgement legal, universal and compulsory. The Analytic, on the other hand, despite the structure of the logical analysis in terms of categories, eventually builds up the structure of a judgement that cannot conform to a logical form. From this

point of view, the Deduction would not only be secondary, but pointless, unless Kant could introduce a new conception of universality and necessity beyond the categorial area. This would imply a further elaboration of the relation between universals and particulars, and that of the exemplary necessity that we met in the *Analytic*. The text of the Deduction, and that of the *Dialectic*, is intended precisely to meet this need and proves to be particularly important since it provides new aspects of transcendental patterns of thinking and its implications on the conceptualisation of the notion of experience. These issues will be elucidated by focusing our research on the illumination of the key concept of *sensus communis*, which holds central position in the undertaking of the Deduction of the reflective judgement. This, in turn, will allow a retrospective reading of the *Analytic*, which will clarify the contradictions in Kant's thought, and re-evaluate the role of reflective judgement as far as the notion of experience is concerned.

Reflective judgement has been so attractive for political thought because of – among other properties – its reference to the social. It has been presented as 'inherently social',¹³ or as the faculty of men's minds where the 'sociability of men [is] the condition of its functioning'.¹⁴ This may seem well justified, since most of the part of the text of the aesthetic judgement is permeated with the notion of the communicability of the judgement of taste as its *sine qua non*, and the concomitant notion of a common sense.

Kant, referring to the key to the critique of taste, addresses the issue of the logical priority between the communicable character of the specific mental state of balance that pertains to reflective judgement and the feeling of pleasure (*CJ* section 217). He defines taste as 'the faculty of estimating what makes our feeling in a given representation *universally communicable*, without the mediation of a concept' (*CJ* section 205).¹⁵ However, in *CJ* section 9, where he deals with the question of the relative priority in a judgement of taste between the pleasure and the estimating of the object, immediately after the exposition of the fundamental need for the judgement to be universally communicable, Kant shifts the emphasis to a thorough exposition of the specific mental state of the mutual accord (common sense) between the cognitive faculties, setting aside the question of priority. It will be seen that the specific nature of common sense provides the ground for both pleasure and communicability, regardless of the issue of their relative priority. It will also prove to provide the solution to the antinomy of reflective judgement and to qualify its distinctive universal and necessary dimension, rescuing it from its potential illegitimacy.

***Sensus communis*: back to the unity of apperception?**

In this section we will be less concerned with the success or failure of the Deduction of the judgement of taste, than with the nature of the common sense, and its relation to the communicability of the aesthetic judgement. In order to demonstrate the universal and necessary character of the judgement of taste, Kant mentions that the subjective conditions of the employment of an aesthetic judgement, that is, common sense, are those 'which we may presuppose in all men (as requisite for a possible experience' (*CJ* 290). Here, Kant seems to be suggesting something rather interesting with regard to his general theory of experience, undermining again his First Critique, that is, that *it is the mutual interaction between imagination and the understanding which is considered to be the necessary prerequisite for experience, and not the subsumption of the former's activity under the categories of the latter*. It is here that we can trace the suggestion made by certain commentators, that in the reflective judgement the origins of the determinant are also found.¹⁶ However, in the significant section 38 footnote, Kant remarks:

In order to be justified in claiming universal agreement for an aesthetic judgement merely resting on subjective grounds, it is sufficient to assume: (1) that the subjective conditions of this faculty of aesthetic judgement are identical with all men in what concerns the relation of the cognitive faculties, there brought into action, with a view to a cognition in general. This must be true, as otherwise men would be incapable of communicating their representations or even their knowledge.

(*CJ* 38 n. 1)

In this section, in combination with section 21, Kant seems to classify aesthetic judgement within the field of judgements of 'cognition in general'. In these types of judgements, what actually happens is that the cognitive powers demonstrate a relative proportion, differing in accordance with the diversity of the objects that are given. The aesthetic judgement is that which corresponds to one specific mental *ratio*

which is best adapted for both mental powers in respect of cognition (of given objects) generally. . . . This disposition can only be determined through feeling (and not by concepts). Since, now, this disposition itself must admit of being universally communicated, and hence also the feeling of it (in the case of a given

representation), while again, the universal communicability of a feeling presupposes a common sense.

(CJ 239)

The communicability of aesthetic judgement is explained by virtue of the communicability of the judgements of cognition in general, as their subset, or in other words, the mental state of the aesthetic judgement appears as a particular case of the mental state of those judgements. Whence though, does the communicable character of the judgements of cognition in general derive, according to Kant?

Cognitions and judgements must, together with their attendant conviction, admit of being universally communicated; *for otherwise a correspondence with the object would not be due to them. They would be a conglomerate constituting a mere subjective play of the powers of representation, just as scepticism would have it* [my emphasis].

(CJ 238)

In the above statement we discern the recurrence of the sort of *Prolegomena* argument, since it is founded on the distinction between judgements of experience (judgements that correspond to the object, and thus assume universal agreement), and judgements of perception (subjective judgements). To be sure, Kant cannot consider as granted – that is, the universal agreement upon an object – exactly that which he wants to prove – that is, the universality of those judgements that refer to an object. Moreover, Kant now reduces aesthetic judgements not merely to judgements of ‘cognition in general’, but to judgements that correspond to an object, that is, to judgements of cognition as they are described in the *Prolegomena*. In fact, in the *Prolegomena* and the *CPR*, it is not the assumption of the communicability of knowledge that justifies the communicability of the correspondent mental state to those judgements of knowledge, but exactly the other way around; it is the identity of the concepts of the understanding that renders possible the communicability of cognition. Furthermore, the existence of the concepts of the understanding is founded upon the requirement of the formal identity of the subject (the original unity of apperception), which is a logical assumption for the identical structure of human consciousness. The factor of communication among people, actual or possible, does not enter the argument at all.

We have traced the gradual reduction of aesthetic judgements to judgements of cognition in general, and in turn to judgements of cog-

nition of objects, where the quite promising introduction of the notion of different proportions between imagination and understanding, is deflated suddenly to the unity under a feeling that stands more as a category – since it validates the correspondence with an object – rather than as an indefinite sensation. Accordingly, the nature of common sense in this context is reduced to ‘the subjective conditions [of this faculty of aesthetic judgement] [which] are *identical with all men* in what concerns the relation of the cognitive faculties’ and to its strict formal status: ‘that the judgement has paid regard merely to this relation (consequently merely to the *formal condition* of the faculty of judgement), and is pure, i.e. is free from confusion either with concepts of the Object or sensations as determining grounds’ (CJ 38 n. 1). Taking into account that common sense is conceived as a state which is (i) identical in all men, (ii) pure and formal and (iii) possesses a cognitive status which conditions aesthetic judgement and allows its communicability, we could conclude that common sense now acquires the features of a mental structure shared by all human beings as judging subjects. The strict formal condition of common sense inevitably cancels imagination’s former creative role, which was intelligible only as formation and configuration of the manifold. Imagination thus loses its formative character and becomes concerned with the spatio-temporal form of the perceptual object. ‘Admitting that in a pure judgement of taste the delight in the object is connected with the *mere estimate of its form*, then what we feel to be associated in the mind with the representation of the object is nothing else than its subjective finality for judgement’ (CJ 38). The feeling of pleasure results exclusively by virtue of the attainment of an internal balance between the mental faculties of the subject, rather than by discovering a moment of attunement to the world. The latter seems to withdraw from reflective judgement’s domain and imagination is aligned more closely with the understanding’s commands on universal validity. Objectivity is not based on an object in nature, and yet an act of objectification is at work in the play of the cognitive powers, securing thereby the subject’s illusory self-contentment. Aesthetic judgement becomes purely formal, and consequently, entirely disinterested, both sensually and cognitively. In this way, aesthetic judgement becomes distanced and impartial, losing any interest in its object, confining itself to the distant, pure contemplation of its form. The former judgement, deeply interested in the world, arises now as merely interested in its inner harmony, thus losing its free playful character and its penetrating ability. In this context, common sense seems to lie within the chain of conditions that

connect the original synthetic unity of apperception with the concepts of the understanding. The harmony acquires rigid, static features and loses its dynamic character, resembling a more static, peaceful conjugality. This accord signals the end of any further movement, and the communicability of this judgement is due only to the identity, the uniformity and the sameness of men as subjects.

We now turn to a further, antipodal development of the notion of common sense in Kant. For, in addition to aligning it with a fundamental, minimal rational ability common to all human beings, Kant also appears to conceive common sense as a result of a long-lasting culture – a historical *Bildung*.

***Sensus communis*: back to tradition?**

Kant, after having given (according to him) adequate reasons for presupposing a common sense in section 21, moves immediately to his next strong claim in section 22: 'The necessity of the universal assent that is thought in a judgement of taste, is a subjective necessity which, under the presupposition of a common sense, is presented as objective'. The Deduction, in combination with section 21, as we have presented it, was supposed to demonstrate this peculiar objectivity of common sense (that is, the universality and necessity of an individual feeling), by virtue of those rational faculties which are identical in all human beings and, as such, necessary for knowledge and experience. He thereby reduces feeling to cognitive attributes and to the conditions of objective experience. However, in section 22, he poses some further important considerations, which, although they have not been taken into account in the Deduction, already anticipate a more complex account of the common sense.

Kant asks at section 240 – though without investigating possible alternatives – whether such

a common sense in fact exists as a constitutive principle for the possibility of experience, or whether it is formed for us as a regulative principle by a still higher principle of reason, that for higher reasons, first seeks to beget in us a common sense. Is taste, in other words, a natural and original faculty, or is it only the idea of one that is artificial, and to be acquired by us, so that a judgement of taste, with its demands for universal assent, is but a requirement of reason for generating such a consensus?

Up until now, we have a positive answer to the first part of the question without, however, it being very convincing. Instead, we read already from section 20 that *sensus communis* 'differs essentially from common understanding, which is also sometimes called common sense'. Or again, even more clearly, in section 40:

Common human understanding which, as mere sound (not yet *cultivated* [my emphasis]) understanding, is looked upon as the least we can expect from anyone claiming the name of man, has the doubtful honour of having the name of common sense (*sensus communis*) bestowed upon it; and bestowed, too, in an acceptation of the word *common* . . . which makes it amount to what is vulgar – what is everywhere to be met with – a quality which by no means confers credit or distinction upon its possessor.

(CJ 293)

Kant no longer ascribes the notion of common sense to the subjective conditions of the cognitive faculties that are identical in all men (section 38 n. 1) that is the common ground with which we are all fortified. The universality and necessity of the aesthetic judgement cannot lie in these commonly shared rational faculties. However, there is now a distinct quality conferred upon the bearer of *sensus communis* that is presented as a *cultivated* understanding, in contrast to a mere sound one. Moreover, in section 32,

There is no employment for our powers, no matter how free, not even of reason itself (which must create all its judgements from the common *source*), which, if each individual had always to start afresh with the crude equipment of his natural state, would not get itself involved in blundering attempts, did not those of others lie before it as a warning. Not that predecessors make those who follow in their steps mere imitators, but by their methods they set others upon the track for seeking in themselves for the principles, and so of adopting their own, often better, course.

And

Following, which has reference to a precedent, and not imitation, is the proper expression for all influence which the products of an exemplary *author* may exert upon others – and this means no more than going to the same sources for a creative work as those to which

he went for his creation, and learning from one's predecessors no more than the mode of availing oneself of such sources. Taste, just because its judgement cannot be determined by concepts, or precepts, is among all faculties and talents the very one that stands most in need of examples of what has, in the course of culture, maintained itself longest in esteem. Thus, it avoids an early lapse in crudity, and a return to the rudeness of its earliest efforts.

(CJ 283)

With justification then, Howard Caygill suggests that 'the universality of the judgement of taste is legitimated, surprisingly, by the appropriation of *tradition*, a remembrance which surpasses both autonomy and heteronomy'.¹⁷ Accordingly for Caygill, 'the *sensus communis* is this critical relation to tradition, the principle of its active appropriation, but it also refers to the fundamental proportion which evokes pleasure'.¹⁸ However insightful, the above statement does not capture the main role of *sensus communis*, as this is envisioned by Kant. The appropriation of the tradition may be one factor, as far as the function of the judgement of taste is concerned, but it exhausts neither the requirement for its grounding in a principle, nor, moreover, the function or role ascribed by Kant to *sensus communis*. The interpretation of *sensus communis* as merely the 'active appropriation and relation to tradition' has an element of whitewash towards Kant's political philosophy. We suggest that in order to understand the meaning of *sensus communis*, we have to incorporate in it the solution to the Antinomy of Taste. It has been argued that Kant's suggested solution to the antinomy is obscure, often unintelligible and metaphysical.¹⁹ Contra Guyer, we should not be surprised by the sudden introduction of the metaphysical realm, nor do we have to surmise what Kant might mean by his supersensible, rational concept, and his distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal elements in the case of an aesthetic judgement.²⁰ However, as will be argued, the introduction of the supersensible concept, as underlying ground for the aesthetic judgement, is not at all sudden or obscure. The supersensible element in the *sensus communis* does not lie in any mysterious new ontological realm, as Guyer claims,²¹ but only in its normative character, and in the kind of social order that it implies. This interpretation allows for the accommodation of *sensus communis* understood in terms of the active appropriation of tradition, yet without exhausting the former in the latter.

***Sensus communis*: in the Architectonic of Pure Reason**

We now turn to the final part of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgement, the Dialectic. Here we acquire a complete image of the judgement of taste and its conditions. We may thus be able to find the thread that unifies the apparently different versions of the notion of common sense. The principle of taste exhibits an antinomy:

1. Thesis: The judgement of taste is not based upon concepts; for, if it were, it would be open to dispute (decision by means of proofs).
2. Antithesis: The judgement of taste is based on concepts; for otherwise, despite diversity of judgement, there could be no room even for contention in the matter (a claim to the necessary agreement of others with the judgement).

(CJ 339)

The suggested solution to this antinomy is that a judgement of taste *does* depend upon a concept, which, however, is an *indeterminate* one. This is a rational concept, that is, an Idea of Reason, which stands as an indeterminate idea of the supersensible within us, and may be regarded as the supersensible substrate of humanity. In a quite illuminating sentence, Kant says:

All contradiction disappears, however, if I say: The judgement of taste does depend on a concept (of *a general ground of the subjective finality of nature for the power of judgement*) [my emphasis], but one from which nothing can be cognised in respect of the object, and nothing proved, because it is in itself indeterminable.

(CJ 340)

In the following Remarks, Kant also clarifies his notion of the rational concept and the supersensible, both as a principle of the subjective finality of nature for our cognitive faculties, and as the ends of freedom (CJ 346). From these Remarks therefore, we see that, for Kant, the indeterminate concept which underlies aesthetic judgement, and *provides* it with universality and necessity, is the 'concept of the general ground of the subjective finality of nature for the judgement', that is, the Idea of Reason as a harmony (a finality) between our cognitive faculties and nature. For example, in a judgement about a beautiful natural object, this object is seen as a work of

art, as if it had been designed so that its form was to be harmonised with our cognitive faculties. In a judgement of taste, we enjoy the harmony both between our cognitive faculties, and between nature and our mind, precisely because we have assumed that nature is final *for us*. Nevertheless, not everybody is able to have this feeling of internal and external harmony, because this presupposes ability for disinterested contemplation, an ability to abstract from charm, emotion or any sensual agreeableness, and to judge only according to the pure form. It is the ability to appreciate the beautiful, and the ability to discriminate nature's finality which can be brought about through culture. By the introduction of the supersensible substratum of the judgement of taste, Kant simply reiterates, in a more general way, the foundation of the judgement of taste on the form of finality of an object, which generates the finality of form of our cognitive faculties (CJ 11, 12). The form of the finality of an object is just an instance of the form of the finality of nature in general. In the aesthetic judgement, therefore, we feel the harmony of our cognitive faculties by virtue of our ability to recognise in nature its pre-adaptation to these faculties.

What, then, is the relation of finality to *sensus communis*? *Sensus communis* is the ideal harmony of our cognitive faculties which comes about not merely through their harmonisation with the form of the beautiful object, but, indeed, with society as a whole. In other words, *sensus communis* is the *ideal norm for the attainment of a perfect harmony within and between individuals, and between their cognitive faculties*. The attainment of that harmony presupposes culture. This kind of culture enables the individual to judge and act in such a way that it becomes an active member in a harmonious whole, and contributes to the attainment of this ideal order. In order to do that, the individual has to strive to overcome its personal, private, subjective bias, and narrow personal interests. Its reflection, therefore, must constitute a weighing of its judgement with the collective reason of mankind.

By the name *sensus communis* is to be understood the idea of a public sense, i.e., a critical faculty which, in its reflective act, takes account of the mode of representation of everyone else, in order, as it were, to weigh its judgement with the collective reason of mankind, and thereby avoid the illusion arising from subjective and personal conditions, which could readily be taken for objective, an illusion that would exert a prejudicial influence upon its judgement.

(CJ 340)

Therefore, the significance of *sensus communis* lies in its *normative character for the attainment of a harmonious social order, which would, in turn, reiterate the internal harmony between the mental faculties of each individual*. It is the attainment of a mutual osmosis between society and individuals, which is reminiscent of the Platonic Republic or the Rousseauian ideal society of the social contract. However, this raises the question of how the common sense and the concomitant social unity could arise. Kant suggests that it is through the reflective act, which takes account of the mode of representation of everyone else, the weighing of judgement with collective reason. This again suggests the relation to, and the active appropriation of, tradition as Caygill suggests. Appropriating tradition involves remembering, the exercise of the faculty of the reproductive imagination, and concern with the accumulated, actual, crystallised judgements of our predecessors. Thus, judging according to tradition plays a harmonising role in society, as this judgement incorporates the wisdom of the past, the weight of endurance through time and the respect for history. *Sensus communis*, however, may be accomplished by weighing the judgement not so much with the actual, but rather with the *merely possible* judgements of others. Accordingly, *sensus communis* is concerned with *possible* consciousness, which points not only to the appropriation of tradition (where these possible judgements *may* lie), but to any kind of consciousness that might be imagined, and would enable social unity. Thus, this allows for the possibility of *breaking* with tradition, and in this way enabling social cohesion. As *sensus communis* is an ideal norm, the achievement of a harmony between and among individuals is one for which ideals of participation in dialogue, persuasion as opposed to force, and mutual respect for reasoning individuals are required. It is these features that underlie aesthetic judgement, along with the exclusion of any sensual and natural inclination. In this sense, the contemplation of the beautiful becomes a symbol of morality as well, and aesthetic judgement is assigned a general humanising role. The proposed model of social order under the norm of the *sensus communis* hardly exceeds either the ideality of the Kingdom of Ends, or the principle of the universalisability of the moral law.²²

The notion of culture as it is expounded in the Third Critique does not imply any constitutive social character underlying the aesthetic judgement, and this is further borne out when we look at Kant's ethical and political texts. In the *Doctrine of Virtue* (51/81), culture is understood as man's power to set and work for an end which he chooses 'independent of nature'. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, culture

comes to be associated with the struggle for perfection, and 'the ideal of morality belongs to culture' (*Universal History*, 21/26). The task of culture progresses through skill and discipline. Discipline helps the control of sensual impulses, so that culture serves to bring about the conditions necessary for following the moral law and exercising freedom. Culture as discipline is directed to a community in which 'no member shall be a mere means, but should also be an end, and, seeing that he contributes to the possibility of the entire body should have this position and function in turn defined by the idea of the whole' (*CJ* 375 footnote1). The development of culture is connected with the emergence of humanity; culture deals with 'Man as such (humanity, really)' (*Doctrine of Virtue* 45/386).

The question that Kant poses in section 22 must now be considered.

Is taste . . . a natural and original faculty, or is it only the idea of one that is artificial and to be acquired by us, so that a judgement of taste, with its demand of universal assent, is but a requirement of reason for generating such a consensus, and does the 'ought', that is, the objective necessity of the coincidence of the feeling of all with the particular feeling of each, only betoken to the possibility of arriving at some unanimity in these matters?

(*CJ* 240)

Kant eventually answers positively to both alternatives since, in the Deduction, he demonstrated the identity of our rational faculties which, however, constitute merely the potentiality, the common ground that, through culture, could be elevated to the higher, cultivated feeling underlying aesthetic judgement. The universality and necessity of this judgement are normative and prescriptive. The necessity of judgement implies, essentially, the necessity of culture, and thereby a universal assent to the same feeling is expected and demanded.

Sensus communis, as an Idea of Reason, is intended to restore a harmony between our rational faculties, between man and nature, and between man and society. Together, these are ultimately equivalent to 'the expedient to bring reason into harmony with itself' (*CJ* 341). Reason, after an exhaustive trial of successive tribunals upon itself, seems to pursue the restoration of its internal harmony, and, along with it, the justification of its possessions (cognitive, moral and aesthetic).

The question of reflective judgement emphasises the enigma of judgement-power, since it is addressed from the standpoint of the contingent particular, which is assumed to fall beyond the laws of the

understanding. Kant's major contribution is precisely the very thematisation of this enigma. In his theoretical ramblings throughout the Critique of Aesthetic Judgement, we find the interesting problematic of the feeling of pleasure, as mediating form between concept and intuition, in which may be detected the potential for enriching the notion of cognition, by including in its process experiences of pleasure and the feeling of life, thereby breaking the stiff distinctions between pure logic and will, thought and desire. We also meet the possibility of an order which emerges not from the imposition of rigid, constraining rules, but through the feeling of pleasure, arising from the free play between the interacting parts. The order of pleasure arises as self-regulated, unplanned, unruléd, transitive and yet surprisingly energising, since it quickens in the subject the feeling of life itself. However, these insightful conceptions lose their dynamism, to the extent that they become constituents of the undertaking of the *solution* of the enigma of reflective judgement. This is the requirement of Transcendental Logic, as long as reflective judgement has to align with the conditions for the possibility of experience as established in the CPR. Since experience cannot now be exhausted as the legislative realm of the understanding, the alignment of the particular with the laws of the understanding does not take on a constitutive character but only a normative one. Hence, we enter the realm of Reason, whereby we are provided with an additional feature of Transcendental Logic, namely its *normative* character.

The conditions for the possibility of experience, from the standpoint of reflective judgement, consist in the normative Idea of Reason of harmony between its faculties and nature. In this context, the feeling of pleasure is but Reason's satisfaction, arising from the *assumption* of the attainment of the particular's alignment with its principles. The mental state of free balance between the understanding and imagination functions as the bearer of a new type of synthesis, which transforms the contingent particular into a necessarily final object of judgement with regard to the laws of the understanding. The order of pleasure gives way to the pleasure of order, since the free play proves to be but a programmed ceremony for the celebration of the principles of Reason. Experience is again the outcome of a synthetic act, this time, not through the rules of the understanding, but through the precepts of finality which render possible the harmonisation of the subject's cognitive faculties. Accordingly, spontaneity may be released from its rule-giving function, but still assumes a unifying role, and indeed a harmonising one. Universality and necessity of judgement in turn, are

secured not by means of the concepts of the understanding but by means of the precepts of Reason, and the order of rules is coupled by the prescription of an order of harmony. The normative and communicable character of the universality of reflective judgement, however, necessitates the transposition of its conditions from the conceptual identity of the self to the prescriptive intersubjectivity of *sensus communis*. Experience in turn, is redefined in normative terms, according to the conditions for compatibility between the laws of the understanding and the principles of Reason, so that Reason itself attains its self-generated systematic unity. Yet, although the tension of reflective judgement is eventually settled in the Architectonic of Reason, its implicitly restless demands betray the unbearable limits of this settlement, since the contingent may well resist its final normalisation and the feeling of pleasure may well turn into an intractable bewilderment.

3

Fichte's Will-to-Freedom: the Appropriation of Experience

Fichte is the main philosopher, preceding Schelling and Hegel, who questioned Kant's representational model of experience. According to Fichte, Kant's major aporia, with regard to the legitimacy of the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgements, is not ultimately resolved, as long as the ground of their deduction – the apperceptive subject – is not properly thematised and itself deduced. This ground in turn, would lay the foundation not only for theoretical but also for practical experience, thereby providing a radical solution to the aporias generated by the Kantian dualism, disentangling the subject from the antinomies between necessity and freedom, phenomena and noumena. However, for Fichte, the legitimacy of the apperceptive subject cannot be attained in the context of Kant's representational–dualistic method. For, as we will discuss later in detail, the representational model of apperception is based on an inherent reflexive act of the pure 'I' upon itself, which can never be deduced, since this act always presupposes that which it precisely attempts to found. Consequently, Fichte's major project is to provide an account of apperceptive subjectivity that would be liberated from the perplexities of the reflexive model.¹ This task is carried through Fichte's major insight, which consists in his conception of the subject in terms of activity, as opposed to a static substratum or a logical concept. 'The intellect, for idealism, is an act, and absolutely nothing more; we should not even call it an active something, for this expression refers to something subsistent in which activity inheres.'² Through the introduction of the subject as sheer activity, indeed as productivity, Fichte mainly attempts to give a unified account of theoretical and practical reason, which would found the unitary nature of subjectivity. One of the fundamental goals of his thought, as he declares in 1795, is to 'bring unity and coherence into the entire human being'.³

Here, we will pursue a thorough investigation of Fichte's project to unify the Kantian contradictions. First, Fichte's account of the contrast between his own method and that of reflective theory will be discussed, as it is expounded by himself and by D. Henrich. This will allow us a perspective on how Fichte attempts to formulate his alternative theory and to what extent he has really detached himself from the reflective method.

Fichte's critique of reflection: in search of an absolute ground

Fichte's critical insight against reflection occurs within his concern for the possibility of a unified account of subjectivity, a theme arising from Kant's two distinct accounts of Reason. The search for unity of Reason has indeed been of fundamental importance to several generations of Kant critics. The source of this possibility in the form of a common faculty or structural identity of theoretical and practical Reason has often been assigned (as intention or incomplete task) to Kant himself, as is the case with Heidegger's concept of the role of the imagination and in Fichte's further elaboration of the subject within the Kantian system. As already mentioned though, the unity of Reason arose for Kant only either as aporia, accompanied by antinomies and paralogisms of Reason or as regulative ideal. Fichte's basic concern with the unity of subjectivity is presented in the *Science of Knowledge (SK)* (1794) as a fundamental question concerning the difference between our representations of freedom and those of necessity. It is followed by his statement of his goal to provide a unified, fundamental principle grounding all experience and thereby celebrating human autonomy.

D. Henrich has proclaimed a rediscovery of Fichte, presenting him as a powerful voice against reflective models of thought, particularly on the question of the self-consciousness. Henrich praises Fichte mainly for the discovery of the difficulty embedded in the reflective models and, consequently, the new status given to the theory of self-consciousness. According to Henrich, Fichte was the first philosopher to recognise the circle around which the reflective theory of self-consciousness revolves. In Henrich's formulation the circularity consists in the following: according to the reflective model of self-consciousness, in order to become aware of myself, I have to direct attention to 'me' as an object of consciousness. However, if I do that, then, in so far as I know I am doing it, I am already self-conscious. Therefore, the 'act' of self-consciousness presupposes it, and I can only become self-conscious if I already am so.

For Henrich, Fichte was the thinker who discovered and also experienced this perplexity. Accordingly, Fichte's attempt to get out of this circle generated his radically different account of the type of subjectivity that pertains to self-consciousness. Fichte understands the latter not only as a force capable of acting upon itself, but also as an objective activity constructing the notion of subjectivity itself.

Fichte's view can be elucidated in the following way: The reflection theory does indeed begin with a subject-self; but it then proceeds to think of it only as a force capable of acting upon itself. With this, the theory gives up the distinctive sense of subjectivity that belongs to self-consciousness. The latter is interpreted instead in terms of a matter-of-fact activity that really belongs to the sphere of objects.⁴

Thus, the formula Fichte counterposed to the reflective model was an account of subjectivity, which posits itself as both subject and object, without assuming for its existence any *a priori* subject-self.⁵ In Henrich's formulation:

The whole of self-consciousness cannot be derived from the subject-factor. Hence, it will not emerge from anyone of its factors, but simultaneously with them all, in a trice, as it were, or *εξάφνης* as Plato had already taught in the case of the highest knowledge. . . . Thus, we have no basis for objecting that *something* that does the positing must precede the act of positing. The self *is* the act through which it comes to be for itself, through which a subject-self becomes aware of itself as Object-Self.⁶

Thus, Henrich points out that Fichte first avoids the problem of circularity by means of the immediate self-positing, and second, that he develops a new theory of self-consciousness in which the subject does not pre-exist its activity, but instead, is *part of* it and constituted through it. Nevertheless, for Henrich, there is still a sense in which Fichte is never completely disentangled from the reflective model; 'we can see that elements of the reflection theory are now insinuating themselves into Fichte's counterproposal'.⁷ On Henrich's reading, Fichte himself becomes aware of a continuous problem with his whole enterprise; namely, that in the act of immediate self-positing, such a positing does not simply *occur*, but even such a self-caused originary act is itself a self-conscious activity. 'Now the "I" has to *be* a self-positing, and *know* itself as a self-positing, which seems to mean

positing itself as a self-positing, *ad infinitum*'.⁸ The same problem appears even more acutely in Fichte's expansion of the first formula as 'the self posits itself absolutely *as* positing itself'. Or, in Henrich's terms, Fichte never achieves a *unity* of the intuitive and conceptual components of his position. However, Henrich does not explain why Fichte never freed himself from the model *per se*. That is to say, his account focuses on what *elements* in Fichte's theory point beyond a reflective model, but avoids the problematic associated with reflection itself and of the elements being themselves still embedded in a reflective model, and hence shot through with contradictions in their entirety.

Fichte's relapse back into reflective theory seems to be the crux of the issue in any re-evaluation of Fichte, and its proper explanation reveals the severely limited contribution of Fichte's account of self-consciousness, especially when this is deployed, as Henrich does, against the philosophy of *Existenz*.⁹ To be sure, Henrich is correct in his analysis as long as the inseparability of the subject and its activity (activity and product) can be sustained. The self is indeed immanent in its activity and thereby the criteria of its self-perceiving are likewise immanent. The articulation of the notion of the self presented also as product (object) of its own activity is indeed a real contribution. This is to be understood in context as in opposition to a dirempted or primary agent whose 'being' consists in an 'essence' prior to its deeds, who chooses or plans his actions and is never *conditioned* by them. In this sense, we consider that the notion of the self as both subject and object is positive, that is, as the self who not only *posits*, but *is posited as well*. How successfully, though, is this element preserved in Fichte's thought? Is this indeed what Henrich describes as Fichte's 'distinctive sense of subjectivity that belongs to self-consciousness . . . that is the latter being interpreted in terms of a matter-of-fact activity that really belongs in the sphere of objects?'¹⁰ Indeed Fichte, in his lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre novo methodo* in 1797, in analysing the self-positing self of the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794, describes the subject as that which discovers itself as acting as both discoverer and discovered. He claims, 'I simply posit myself. This means I am conscious of myself, first as the object of consciousness, and then again as the subject, i.e. the subject who is conscious. The discovered and the discoverer are one and the same; the I is identical with immediate consciousness.'¹¹ However, the discovered, as Fichte explains a few pages later, is the intuition of the subject's absolute freedom! 'The object in question is freedom, productive activity, the

intuiting subject, I-hood in its entirety. . . . The immediate object of consciousness is no object as such, but is rather the productive activity itself, i.e., freedom.¹² This appears to be the provision of the missing evidence for the most desired proof of 'the most prized'¹³ of Reason's possessions, that is, freedom. In fact, however, this alleged proof – the intuition of freedom – goes no further than the Kantian claim of the *fact* of the moral law. Only as irony then could we understand the postulate that the self is posited by the fact – the object – that it is absolutely free, that is, able only to posit. Accordingly, when Fichte claims that the self is constituted by its activity, we can now understand by what sort of activity this is so. In fact, it is not *any kind* of activity, but rather a specific self-interaction, an act of self-reverting, of thinking oneself *immediately* without reference to any mediating factor. Thus, the self turns out to be constituted exclusively by its thought about itself, and in particular its thought as an absolutely free agent. Nevertheless, even in this case this self-constitution could be fruitful if the self allowed its self-perception to be exposed in a real interaction with the world. In this exposition, the self might, possibly, experience the strength and validity of its immediate self-certainty. However, this exposition never occurs since self-positing has a transcendental status, as will be seen later.

It becomes clearer now why Fichte is never completely freed from the reflective model, since his immediate self-positing reproduces precisely the heart of this model, that is, the concept of a subject-self as pure concept: the vicious circle of abstract reflexivity. The lineage of the problem can be seen here between the agent of freedom in the Cartesian *cogito*, of formulating objective judgements of experience in the Kantian transcendental subject, and of self-positing in Fichte. This conclusion is opposed to Henrich's argument. This can be seen if we look at this issue further. Henrich considers Fichte's critique of circularity in reflective theory as a powerful immanent critique against it, and thus, the latter's model of the self-conscious is classified as anti-reflective. However, Fichte's critique of the circularity of reflective theory occurs within the bounds of this way of thought, and he thereby replicates the difficulty. The motivation for his critique lies in his inner need of an assertion of the existence of a fundamental ground that would allow the firmest establishment of human autonomy, rather than in the overcoming of reflection itself. Fichte does not identify the origin of the circularity problem. He rather presents it as an infinite regress in which the essence of the

problem becomes even more obscure. In his words, the problem is formulated as follows:

I am conscious of some object, B. But I cannot be conscious of this object without also being conscious of myself, for B is not I and I am not B. But I can be conscious of myself only in so far as I am conscious of consciousness. Therefore, I must be conscious of this act of consciousness, i.e., I must be conscious of this consciousness of consciousness. How do I become conscious of this? This series has no end, and therefore consciousness cannot be explained in this manner. . . . The only way to avoid this objection is to discover some object of consciousness that is at the same time the subject of consciousness. One would thereby have disclosed the existence of an immediate consciousness, i.e. an object to which one would not have to oppose a new subject.¹⁴

It is worthwhile considering more closely the way Fichte conceives the problem and why, consequently, he does not exercise an immanent critique of the problem of the reflection model. The first two sentences constitute a loose statement of the Kantian condition of experience, that is, the original unity of apperception. Kant specified the required unity of apperception as the self-consciousness of the self's formal sameness in all its representations ($I = I$, as formal identity). In the next four sentences, Fichte poses the condition of the unity of apperception itself or, in other words, the requirement of apperception of the unity of apperception. As we have discussed in the first chapter, Kant did not specifically address this issue, but rather took it for granted by assuming arbitrarily the *a priori* certainty of the self's formal identity through time: 'For the mind could not possibly think the identity of itself in the multiplicity of its representations, and indeed this *a priori*, if it did not have *before its eyes the identity of its action*' (CPR A96, my emphasis), or 'numerical identity is inseparable [from self-consciousness in its entirety], and *a priori certain, since nothing can come into cognition except by means of its original apperception*' (CPR A113, my emphasis). The latter statement is illuminating. For Kant, original apperception is the exclusive condition of all possible consciousness, so even of self-consciousness itself, taken as object of consciousness. Thus, he was obliged to assume the *a priori unprecedented certainty of the unity of apperception*. Hence, it was Kant who first posited the *a priori* certainty of the identity of the self *implicitly*, and thence Fichte isolated and developed further the conception of *a priori* certainty as activity of the self-positing and gave it a strong practical

dimension, that is, not only the attribute of the numerical identity of the self but the certainty of complete self-determination.

By emphasising and rendering this *a priori certainty* as a necessary condition of the possibility of self-consciousness, Fichte essentially provided the transcendental condition not only for experience but also for the unity of apperception itself.¹⁵ Now the issue, which Kant asserted implicitly and Fichte made explicit, is the reason why we could never attain the apperception of the unity of apperception; or, more generally, why self-consciousness within the reflective model could never be attained. Although Fichte did indeed make the difficulty explicit, he never explained *the origin of the difficulty*, and therefore never extricated himself from it. The answer lies precisely in the character of this unity of apperception, or self-consciousness in the reflective model, where the latter is considered as a relation of pure, static identity, *and thus what it presupposes is purely identical with what it wants to attain*. In turn, this relation of static and pure identity is the inevitable result and requirement of the reflective model where the subject is conceived in pure logical, formal terms. Besides, only in conditions of a transcendental context could the subject ever be considered so static, and cut off from any empirical or historical movement.

Fichte, by positing a first beginning, does not reply to the difficulty of the *determinate* circularity, but only to the problem of infinite regress or to circularity in general, to which he reduced the difficulty. However, circularity becomes vicious only within the reflective model; instead, if we try to think of self-consciousness beyond the reflective model, circularity does not constitute a problem at all. For, whenever we think of ourselves – become aware of ourselves – we always do it from a level of pre-existing self-awareness. This does not mean (as in the reflective model) that we already assume what we want to achieve. Self-consciousness is not a static, solid product of *one single* act or a state of an equation whose *relata* are perfectly equal and identical ($I = I$, as formal unity of apperception). Self-consciousness is a contradictory process, where the relation of a self to itself is both identical and non-identical, since it involves both moments of 'truth', and illusions, frustrations and self-confirmations, always mediated by the self's interaction with the world and the internal contradictions generated within it. The acknowledgement that we always discover ourselves mediated by and within an already existing level of self-consciousness is not necessarily related to any transcendental presupposition, which is always the same static and external condition. Instead, it signifies that the conditions of possible experi-

ence are conditioned by experience itself, and thus movable, dynamic and immanent to the movement of self-knowledge. The beginning that we inevitably make some time, in this process, has nothing to do with any absolute beginning or foundation, but simply is a point in a circle, both mediated and immediate, contingent and yet necessary, in so far as it pertains to the necessity of the movement itself. Hence, we have a further explanation of why Fichte cannot escape from the reflective model at the methodological level: he seeks to overcome the reflective model by throwing the coin of reflection onto the other side. He replaces the rigid dichotomy of concept and intuition with their pure identity that can never be attained and thus reproduces a similarly vicious circle. Moreover, the conceptualisation of the act of self-positing as pure identity essentially annuls the potentially fruitful connotations of the notion of productivity, which is claimed to characterise the self. For the notion of pure identity either – as an abstract concept – brings back the problematic of pure logic, or – as a pure and all-inclusive act – the problematic of a monotheistic theology, or rather both in their supplementarity. On Henrich's reading, the issue of the true origin of the difficulty is never broached, perhaps because Henrich's problematic itself develops from a reflective standpoint, thereby discovering Fichte's insight in his positing of the immediate, pure identity rather than in his potentially dynamic notion of productivity. Once this issue is raised, it points to severe limitations in Fichte's theory that Henrich does not acknowledge. The substance of these limitations will become clearer as we proceed.

We move on now to look at Fichte's positing of his first principle, his internal contradiction, and thereby the generation of his entire system.

The discovery and loss of the ground

As we have seen, Fichte articulated his basic contention in terms of the recognition of the above-mentioned difficulty of self-consciousness.

Thus, Fichte counter-proposes the immediate emergence of the subject-object self for which, moreover, is claimed the status of *the founding ground of all possible human activity*. The requirement of such a self-grounded first foundation is justified simply in the name of the systematic character of any theory that claims to be science. The grounding principle is necessary in order to transfer its certainty to the rest of the propositions and thus to establish the systematic apodicticity of scientific knowledge. This first grounding principle consists in the

absolute and unconditioned act of the self-positing ego, expressed by the pure identity $I = I$.

The issue of an unconditioned beginning has been the object of severe critique in Hegel's *Science of Logic* (*SL*). Hegel's critique develops as follows: the notion of a pure, undetermined beginning, which as such is intended to constitute the ground of experience, is self-refuted. For, the concept of ground implies that the latter, by virtue of its grounding, is connected with all experience. But, if it is connected it is thereby determined, and so the ground ceases to be absolute or the unconditioned indeterminate. On the other hand, if it is not connected, it does not ground anything. Hegel cites Jacobi's eloquent expression of this logical paradox: 'What brings about pure spontaneity (ego) into oscillation? Whence does its pure vowel get its consonant, or rather how does the *soundless*, uninterrupted sounding interrupt itself and break off in order to gain at least a kind of "self-sound" (vowel), an *accent*?'¹⁶ Or in Hegel's words:

With this wholly abstract purity of continuity, that is, indeterminateness and vacuity of conception, it is indifferent whether this abstraction is called space, pure intuiting or pure thinking: it is altogether the same as what the Indians call Brahma, when for years on end, physically motionless and equally unmoved in sensation, conception, fantasy, desire and so on, looking only at the tip of his nose, he says inwardly only *Om, Om, Om*, or else nothing at all.¹⁷

Hegel's argument against the notion of an undetermined beginning unfolds from his general problematic that runs through the first section on Being of the *SL*. This can be succinctly formulated as the basic idea that what appears as sheer immediacy is already mediated by a specific mode of thought which thinks in terms of static oppositions. Being, in the *SL*, stands precisely for a dualistic mode of thought, which does not recognise the immanent relations between things, the mobility of concepts, the alternation of contraries. Hence, Hegel argues that the notion of indeterminacy is already a determination. The notion of sheer indeterminacy, in contrast to any determination, can be sustained only by a mode of thought pertaining to the sphere of Being (in Hegel's *SL* terms). However, our contention is that the determination of indeterminacy refers to the *notion* of indeterminacy, that is, determination is attributed by *thought* to *something that is already a thought*. This, in fact, is brought forward by Hegel himself in the second part of the *SL*, the section on Essence, in particular on the

passages on Determining and Positing Reflection, which criticise the Kantian and Fichtean modes of thought. However subtle Hegel's critique may be, the issue that we want to emphasise – which points beyond the details of a thorough discussion on the *SL* – is that Hegel's refutation of absolute beginning develops *within the context of thought's determinations*, which distil experience. In other words, the refutation of indeterminacy – as an already logical determination – is only partially sustainable, for otherwise it is implied that indeterminacy, just by being *thought*, is cancelled. This would be the case if indeterminacy were only a thought itself. Moreover, this sort of argument essentially enhances Fichte's account, for it is ego's thought itself that posits the determination, which thus allegedly annuls indeterminacy. Nevertheless, what happens if indeterminacy pertains to something more or even beyond thought? What happens if indeterminacy pertains to a cosmic power? For, if we consider the interaction of ground and experience not in terms of abstract concepts but in terms of powers – as living forces – the process of their interaction does not imply their exhaustive and necessary interdetermination, for, as powers, they have their self-moving, relatively autonomous and indeterminable dimension. We will not pursue here the controversial issue to what extent Hegel claims that thought-determinations ultimately exhaust experience. This requires separate research. However, the issue is that even in the case that also the Notion – the third section of the *SL*, which presents thought's determinations in its most richness – stands for an illusory conceptualisation of experience, Hegel's account of experience unfolds from the standpoint of its transcription at the conscious-logical level, while the remaining gap – between experience and its logical recollection – is never thematised. Therefore, we suggest that the notion of an indeterminable beginning is sustainable, in so far as it is considered as a moment, as a dimension in cosmic movement, which escapes the grasp of thought's determinations. Accordingly, the objection to Fichte's self-positing ego does not concern its indeterminable aspect, so long as this act is considered as a spontaneous movement and a self-moving productivity. Instead, the objection concerns the *absolute* status that Fichte ascribes to ego's *self-positing* spontaneity, whose determinations are intended to ground and appropriate experience in its totality. In Fichte's system, thought's spontaneity is considered as an all-determining power. Its unconditioned status does not refer to its logical indeterminacy, for logically it is determined, namely, as sheer activity as opposed to sheer passivity. The unconditioned, absolute status refers to its overwhelming *power* to determine

everything, evoking thus more the power of a transcendent god rather than the lifeless concept of abstract identity.

However, Fichte lies in need of proving his extraordinary assertions, for he acknowledges that the all-powerful ego finds itself in lack of sufficient power, loss of control, being paradoxically suppressed by what was so far considered to be sheer passivity. Accordingly, the 'I' is now defined in contrast to the 'not-I'. They are defined as utterly different, for this is the only sufficient way of retaining the ego's status as pure activity. Along with this – despite Fichte's project to raise the dichotomies of the representational model – a whole set of rigid dualisms is set out: infinite activity, as opposed to finite, pure, unmediated self-activity as opposed to activity directed to objects, sheer agility as opposed to sheer passivity, consciousness as opposed to being and positive as opposed to negative. At this point we reach our initial and basic concern, that is, to see how Fichte attempts to unify the Kantian dualisms which, however, he himself reproduces and reformulates at a new level.

Now Fichte is obliged to unify his own poles. In fact, these poles are but the positing of his two basic principles postulated in the *SK* of 1794. From now on, we will follow a close textual analysis of the *Wissenschaftslehre* (*WL*), in conjunction with his lectures of 1797, in order to see the manner in which Fichte treats the contradictions that undermine his grounding principle.

First, we turn to inquire into the way Fichte poses the problem of the distinction between theoretical and practical Reason, and from which perspective he attempts to bridge it. In the First Introduction to *WL* (1794), the main questions are formulated as follows:

Some of our representations are accompanied by the feeling of freedom, others by the feeling of necessity. While for the representations which depend on freedom no question about their source Reasonably arises, for the latter it does so. But the question, 'what is the source of the system of representations which are accompanied by the feeling of necessity, and of this feeling of necessity itself?' is one that is surely worthy of reflection'.¹⁸

By the word 'necessity' in this context, Fichte means constraint and not objective validity. The rest of this short introduction is essentially devoted to explaining why he is going to treat this question from the angle of Idealism. The latter corresponds to a 'higher type of man who believes in his self-sufficiency and independence from everything that

is outside himself'.¹⁹ This type of man lies in direct contrast to those 'who have not yet raised themselves to full consciousness of their freedom and absolute independence [and thus] find themselves only in the presentation of things'²⁰ (the dogmatist or realist). Apparently the *WL* is developed within Idealism and the celebrated statement 'what sort of philosophy one chooses depends, therefore, on what sort of man one is',²¹ has only a rhetorical character and is of no relevance to Fichte's allegedly anti-foundationalism or relativism, as has been argued.²² The latter argument has been mainly developed on the basis that Fichte postulates his first principle as something which should be discovered by everyone within his soul, and so should not be subject to the requirement of proof. True, a simple appeal to immediate self-evidence, that Fichte eventually makes, fails to establish a first principle. However, this does not absolve Fichte from his foundationalism, but simply demonstrates his failure to found an absolute ground, a failure that will become clearer through our examination of his enterprise to deduce his grounding principle. To begin with, although Fichte claims his first principle as unproved and self-grounded, he himself implicitly confesses that he violates it by means of the second principle, which is not derivable from the first. Hence, the third principle and its analysis – which constitutes the bulk of the *WL* – is an unacknowledged attempt at a *deduction* of the first founding principle; a deduction that consists in an attempt to synthesise the utterly opposed principles.

The grounding of the ground

Before undertaking in detail a discussion of Fichte's analysis of his third grounding principle in the foundation of theoretical knowledge, we would like to make a more general comment on his third principle. Through the first principle, Fichte asserts that the category of *Reality in general* is posited. Through the second, in contrast, the category of *Negation in general* is posited. Thus the following contradiction arises: 'How can A and –A, being and non-being, Reality and Negation, be brought together without mutual elimination and destruction?'²³ The suggested 'solution' is given by means of their mutual limitation so that they will both be partially posited. The latter assumes their divisibility. 'To *limit* something is to abolish its reality not *wholly* but *in part* only, by negation. Thus, apart from reality and negation the notion of limit also contains that of *divisibility* (*the capacity for quantity in general*)'.²⁴ However, how is infinity divisible? What does 'part of

the infinite', either as being or as non-being, mean? In what does this absolute difference between Reality and Negation consist, and if they are thus absolutely different, how can they limit each other? In fact, Fichte does not explicitly address these questions. However, the schema-solution provided by him suggests that the as yet absolutely different realms of Reality and Negation be now considered in identical terms, namely, as quantity in general. The incomprehensible divisibility of infinity claimed by Fichte, in our view, can only be explained by its converse as a quantifiable, selfsame totality, divisible in infinite identical units. This quantitative homogeneous totality turns out to be the all-inclusive Fichtean self which simply posits itself now as infinite, total self, then as finite self along with its concomitant not-self, respectively, according to the different amounts which are posited by the ego from its total quantity. Hence the final formulation of the third principle: 'In the self I oppose a divisible not-self to the divisible self.'²⁵ Thus, the absolute difference between self and not-self is turned into sheer selfsameness, and it is precisely the procedure of the *dissolution of qualitative difference* which we want to emphasise as the guiding thread of his thought. In this light we can more easily follow the tortuous path of his attempt to perform the desired synthesis between self and not-self.

(a) Grounding by means of efficacy

Here, we will examine Fichte's method of unifying the contradictions in order to legitimise his non-representational project. The third grounding principle, applied to theoretical knowledge, generates a fundamental contradiction that Fichte attempts to resolve. The application of the grounding principle in theoretical knowledge is that 'the self posits itself as limited by the not-self'. However, this stands in flagrant contradiction to the first principle, which thus requires reaffirmation. Thus the opposing propositions to be synthesised are:

1. 'The not-self (actively) determines the self (which is to that extent passive)'.
2. The self posits itself as absolute activity.

Fichte presents the contradiction in quantitative terms and states:

'If the self is to be determined this means that reality is destroyed therein. Therefore, if the self thus posits within itself only a portion of the absolute totality of the real, it thereby destroys the remainder

of this totality within itself. And so . . . it posits a portion of reality, equal to that destroyed, in the not-self'.²⁶

Hence, a first synthesis can be achieved by positing on behalf of the self a portion of its reality in the not-self. In that sense the not-self determines the self, while the latter remains self-determined since it posits by its own activity part of its reality. The above synthesis is rendered possible by the 'higher generic concept' of 'indetermination' according to which 'the quantity of the one is posited in terms of its opposite, and vice versa. In determining the reality or negation of the self, we simultaneously determine the negation or reality of the not-self and vice versa'.²⁷ However, the contradiction remains in another form: 'But how, then, are we able to remove parts of reality from the self?', since all reality is posited absolutely in the self. How is the *transference* of reality, or of activity from the self to the not-self, possible? Fichte, throughout various arguments, constantly makes use of tautologous arguments and technical devices which never succeed in answering the main question of why the self makes this voluntary transference of activity to the not-self, or of reality (activity) to the not-self. He gives us a merely implicit answer: 'the not-self has reality for the self only to the extent that the self is *affected*, and in the absence of such affection, it has none whatever'.²⁸ The implicit answer is that reality is removed from the self when it is affected by the not-self. The above synthesis is called the *synthesis of efficacy* (causality) where the active factor is the not-self. But if the not-self is considered as sheer passivity, how does it affect the self? Whence does the not-self find the energy before the self's voluntary donation of activity? And if the not-self already had the activity to affect the self, how would all activity be posited by the self? Fichte does not tackle such objections, so his first basic synthesis seems unsuccessful.

(b) Grounding by means of independent activity

Indeed, Fichte himself acknowledges the insufficiency of the preceding synthesis, and accepts that the main question remains unanswered. He asks again, why does the self transfer activity to the not-self? Consequently, 'how, then, can a passivity be posited in the self?'.²⁹ Fichte then turns his focus almost exclusively on the self, and essentially the rest of his exceptionally detailed and pedantic analysis consists in his attempt to further elaborate the notion of the self. Thus in the question mentioned above, Fichte first proceeds to show how the self could be both free and constrained. Here, we can discern some more positive and

flexible elements in his thought where he tries to combine freedom and necessity. He defines the self as *substance in general* in the sense of the infinite ability for infinite acts; but the manifestation of this substance becomes, through its determinate acts, the determinate choices of the self where freedom and necessity are conjoined. In this context, passivity is defined as simply a lesser degree of activity (always in quantitative terms). Then the question arises that if the self is infinite, why should it choose at all? Why should it determine its passivity through its activity? So, in spite of this elaboration, Fichte ends up at the same point, positing the same question: 'why should the self posit passivity in itself, even if passivity is now called a lesser degree of activity?'³⁰

At this crucial point, Fichte is no longer willing to linger on the problem, and he accepts the need for a radical solution. Here he introduces (in a completely arbitrary way) the concept of *independent activity* which dissolves, as a *deus ex machina*, all these spells. Nevertheless, this activity, in the form of the imagination, constitutes the heart of his method. At this point in addition, he acknowledges that up until now he did not advance a single step from his initial point:

If the self posits itself as self-determined, it is not determined by the not-self; if it is determined by the not-self, it does not posit itself as self determined. . . . But the question why in general a passivity must be posited, instead of letting matters rest with the activity in the first thing, that is, why in general, there has to be an interdetermination, it is not yet answered thereby.³¹

The answer to this problem is again given in an obscure and technical way, which is however illuminating for the rest of his enterprise and for our interest. Fichte, instead of answering his own question directly, that is, why in general a passivity must be posited in the self, sets about answering *how* – in which *manner* passivity can be posited – rather than *why* it is posited at all. However, even from this exposition we can infer a useful conclusion. Fichte asserts that in order for passivity to be posited in the self there must be possible the transition of the activity of the self towards the not-self. 'In this transition, however, there is and must be a connecting link, or a ground which is here the ground of conjunction. This, as we know, is quantity, which is alike in both self and not-self'.³² The transition is completely smooth since it occurs within the uniformity of quantity. Here, self and not-self are explicitly claimed to be selfsame. Consequently, when the not-self takes on the form of another actual subject, it is considered as *identical to one's self*.³³ He then asserts that this

ground of conjunction is not dependent on the principle of interdetermination; instead, the latter is dependent on it. He claims that

once passivity has been posited in the self, it will be granted without hesitation that *activity is posited in the not-self*; but why then, in general, is activity posited? The answer to this question is no longer to be found in the principle of interdetermination, but in the *higher grounding principle*.³⁴

At last, this higher grounding principle is to give the account of the passivity in the self. Now, if the ground lies in the not-self, 'we are no longer talking of mere quantity, but of quality', by means of which 'we arrive at materialist Spinozism, which is a form of dogmatic realism'.³⁵ Fichte excludes any possibility for the not-self to be different from the self and active on its own; this would lead directly to a lower type of man. Neither self nor not-self could be simultaneously active and passive. Therefore, the ground must necessarily be sought in the self itself, what Fichte calls the *third factor X*. Fichte does not simply assert that passivity is able to be posited, to be transferred due to the sameness of quality between self and not-self, that is, the determination of quantity. He asserts that this smooth transition should be allowed and, in turn, should be performed by a third factor X:

Passivity and activity as such are opposed; but if passivity is to be immediately posited by activity they must also concur in a third thing X *which permits* the transition from passivity to activity. This third thing, which is the ground of conjunction, is the independent activity which constitutes a larger circuit which incorporates interdetermination.³⁶

Therefore, Fichte here hypostatizes, or rather *personifies*, the positing of passivity in the self. This independent activity is nothing but imagination itself, that is, the self itself which decides again to limit itself! The desired synthesis does not occur through any independent dynamics of the interaction between the two supposedly opposed poles. Instead, it is performed by a third agent which manipulates the alleged interaction from above. Next, we will examine how Fichte attempts to further elaborate the notion of this self-limiting self by means of the imagination. This is the true site of his critical Idealism, where the intellect operates by its own laws, self-determining, self-differentiating and synthesising anew its internal self-differentiation.

The 'baffled' consciousness: self-grounded ground, or the fact becomes act

So far, Fichte has been left with two main syntheses, that of *efficacy* and that of the *independent* activity. The first seems too 'realistic', the second too 'idealist'. The former accounts for an active not-self that directly affects the self that is thereby determined. According to this, the self's finitude is utterly dependent on something external. The latter accounts for an active self, which regulates the distribution of passivity and activity in itself, essentially taking no account whatsoever of the not-self. Fichte, though moving within Idealism, is nevertheless concerned to avoid an extreme version of crude Idealism that would give no reason at all for the restrictedness of the self. Hence, his next and final step is to attempt a sufficient synthesis, which could take account of the role of the not-self without, however, questioning the independence of the self. The above task will be performed within the context of a further elaboration of the concept of substantiality, that is, by a more profound analysis of the operation of the intellect. The latter, according to his critical Idealism, would function in a lawgiving manner of self-determination, delimiting itself from a totally lawless and chaotic activity. In what follows, we will see to what extent Fichte does attain a sufficient account of the synthesis in question.

Fichte does not seek a fundamental divergence from the role of independent activity. Instead, the latter is considered as an important result of his investigation, which simply has to be elaborated further so that it can incorporate in its explanatory framework the realist anomaly of the concept of efficacy.

We have seen so far that the independent activity is the higher ground that accounts for the positing of the passivity of the self within itself. Fichte elaborates the way this process occurs through the further development of the *concept of substantiality*. As we have mentioned, Fichte defined the self as substance in general (the general notion of self-positing, infinite activity, absolute freedom) within this framework. Now, he states that the self does not posit the whole of reality at once; it simply posits a part of reality, a limited sphere A (the positing of passivity), and thus the non-positing activity is posited as the sphere of exclusion B (negation through affirmation in his words). He gives the following example, comparing substance (the self) with a piece of iron that moves!!:

Suppose a determinate piece of iron = C, that moves. You posit the iron absolutely, as an absolute totality, as it is posited through its

mere concept = A (in virtue of the principle $A = A$), and in the sphere of this you fail to find the movement = B; hence by the positing of A, you exclude B from its sphere. Yet you do not eliminate the notion of the iron = C, you have no wish to deny absolutely the possibility of this; so you posit it outside the sphere of A, in an *indeterminate* sphere, because you simply *do not know on what condition*, and *for what reason*, the pieces of iron = C may move. Sphere A (is) if the totality of the iron, and yet is also not so, for the motion of C, which is also iron, after all, is not included therein.³⁷

The sphere A is determinate, limited already, the sphere B is a determinable one and the totality C will be the result of the further determination of A (that is, the concept of iron) by means of the new determination acquired in the sphere B. 'The absolute totality is to be neither A, nor $A + B$, but A determined by $A + B$ '.³⁸ Or, more simply, 'the self is not utterly determined but will be determined by means of its further interaction with the not-self. Substance, the self, is the totality as determinate *determinability*'.³⁹

It has been argued that this procedure of determination consists in the fruitful interaction between self and not-self, subject and object: 'The subject is itself, but must also always be related to an object in order to be a subject. The determinability of a subject needs both, that is, only through both can one ever understand the intrinsic character of a subject. . . . Substance is only a relationship with nothing fixed.'⁴⁰ To be sure, it is here that we can find the most fruitful elements of Fichte's account of the constitution of the self, where the conception of the self as activity becomes meaningful, especially in his suggestion that self-consciousness results from the never-ending interplay between subject and world. Nevertheless, we have to examine more closely the nature both of this interplay and consequently of the acquired determinations.

Let us first see the way the self posits this limited sphere; in other words, how does the self limit itself and in what does the limit consist? It is here that Fichte seeks to take into account the concept of efficacy. His solution is to turn a crude realism into a refined one, that is, to reduce the uncomfortable affection to a gentle check (*Anstoss*), a resistance that instead of setting a definite bound to the I's activity, merely serves to give the I *the task* of setting bounds to itself. The 'I' feels the resistance in its flight in the air, above the ground of experience⁴¹ and thereby sets a boundary to itself, that is, posits itself as limited (viz. sphere A). Sphere B is the sphere of its potential determination by

means of positing its future boundaries during its outreaching activity. Thus, the object declares its presence simply by a mere *check* of the self's activity and the alleged interplay is but a *clash*, an instant contact which generates the feeling of resistance:

The objective to be excluded *has no need at all to be present*; all that is required – if I may so put it – is the presence of a check on the self that is for some reason that lies merely outside the self's activity, the subjective must be extendible no further. Such an impossibility of further extension would then delimit – the mere interplay we have described, or the mere incursion.⁴²

Hence, the object is translated into simply the boundary, which, since it is only posited by the ego, is arbitrary and indeterminate. Furthermore, in the lectures of 1797, the object is explained exclusively as an instant of the I's activity, and its origin is completely forgotten. The following statement is telling: '*Why should we and why must we posit any object at all? . . . We posit objects precisely because we have posited an absolute acting, to which the objects of our experience refer and by mean of which these objects are given to us*'.⁴³ Now, the object has been absorbed by the subject, it has been appropriated by the self-assertive I.⁴⁴ Hence, the statement,

it is not such a trivial matter as it appears to some people, whether philosophy should begin from a fact or from an Act (that is, *from pure activity which presupposes no object but itself creates it*, so that action immediately becomes dead). For if it starts with the fact it places itself inside the world of existence and of finitude, and will find it hard to discover the way that leads from there to the infinite and the supersensual; if it begins from an Act, it will stand at the point where the two worlds meet and from which they can both be seen at a glance.⁴⁵

However, the source of the check still remains inexplicable; the realist residue is still there, the desired synthesis still unattained. Nevertheless, Fichte still claims a synthesis to have been accomplished. This happens within the internal world of the self itself, where the subject-object opposition has now taken its proper formulation, namely, as the clash between the self's certainty of its absolute indeterminacy and its feeling of finitude. The synthesis apparently is not the result of any procedure of interaction, since anyway the

third term has been expelled, but is a mere holding together of the opposed terms.

This interplay of the self, in and with itself, whereby it posits itself at once as finite and infinite – an interplay that consists, as it were, in self-conflict, and is self-reproducing, in that the self endeavours to unite the irreconcilable, now attempting to receive the infinite in the form of the finite, now, baffled, positing it again outside the latter, and in that very moment seeking once more to entertain it under the form of finitude – this is the power of the imagination.⁴⁶

Imagination proves to be the basic bearer of the uniting of the opposites, having first translated the object into the subjective feeling and quite easily justifying this feeling as a product of the I's infinite nature! The unification of the distinctions is nothing but the self-justifying activity of the self, which, in every encounter with the world, exhausts its activity as its self-projection. In the sight of the other it recognises only itself and thus absorbs it within it, by the activity of imagination. Imagination is but the power that enables intellectual intuition (the original self-positing) to shine upon the other. But the light is so blinding (absolute self-certainty) that the self cannot see the other, but only the reflection of its shining upon it. Thus, the synthesis is nothing but the harmonious yet baffling coexistence of the self's infinite self-assertion and the illusory moments of its attainment. From this point of view, Fichte identifies infinite and finitude, while he previously considered them as utterly different. '*Both are one and the same*; this signifies, in brief: no infinity, no bounding; no bounding, no infinite; infinity and bounding are united in one and the same synthetic component'.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, in the realm of the Practical⁴⁸ things are radically difficult. Imagination is helpless, for the object, the negligible realist residue, now becomes monstrous, alien, unconquerable, the thing-in-itself. The feeling of resistance is no longer a moment of freedom, but an unbearable, infinite indication of the self's inability to be what it believes itself to be. The dominant duty for the self now is to *transcend* its limits, an 'ought', an infinite striving to jump beyond its shadow. The happy consciousness of harmony in the sphere of imagination now becomes grieving and mourning for the loss of its previous achievements. The determinations resulting from the process of the subject's unfolding self-determination are poor and repetitive, for the ego eventually remains a vacuous self-relation. The ego never

allows a real interaction with its other, and therefore an essential self-differentiation never takes place but only a fictitious one between ego and its self-repelling. The third term – the other – functions merely as a remote echo; this only gives the ego the task for its determination. The thus received determinations are faded, vague and indefinite with the weight of a shadow – the shadow of the distanced other – and so floating in the midst of an illusory determinacy. The notion of contradiction itself is considered a blemish to be eradicated in the name of the inviolable unity of consciousness. The interaction of the opposed terms thus appears even more frightening, its outcome unpredictable and threatening to the ego's authority. The contraries never really interact; they are just conjoined and disjoined by an intermediate neutral space: the space of the void where imagination oscillates. They are kept apart and move in a linear manner with separate roles, fixed and static. Accordingly, the sought unity acquires the status of either a normative duty for the sake of harmony, through subjugation (in the practical realm), or the monotonous celebration of an empty identity, which never dares to expose itself in its unconfessed, tormenting contradictions (in the theoretical one).

Conclusion: the act becomes fact: Fichte's fundamental ontology

Did Fichte eventually succeed in his Deduction of the first fundamental principle? In practical reason, apparently not, since the first principle assumes the form of an infinite ought. In theoretical reason, the principle took the form of an unjustifiable usurpation of the object by the subject: the claim of the first principle was rather repeated through the exposition of its various forms, and no Deduction was forthcoming. Fichte's initial question in the first Introduction regarding the source of the system of representations accompanied by the feeling of necessity is answered essentially by establishing the subjective act of the infinite activity of the self. This is the reason why the second Introduction is much more far-reaching and conspicuously bent towards exposing the first principle as a matter of unquestionable validity. The question of the first Introduction is now shifted to the question of the validity of the answer given by the *WL*. Despite his claims that his philosophy begins from an act (the self-positing ego) and not from a fact, the opposite is actually the case. 'How then is the philosopher to ensure

the objectivity of this purely subjective act? . . . I answer: this act is by its nature objective. That I exist for myself is a fact.⁴⁹ Thus, the failure of the Deduction of his first principle in the 1794 *WL* and other relevant critiques led Fichte to give more weight to the factual, unproved nature of the first principle, instead of questioning the veracity of that original fact.⁵⁰ The original fact is one that everyone must discover in himself, 'the source of life is contained therein, and without it there is death'.⁵¹ The unproved and assertive character of this fact, however, along with the confession of the *WL* that it eventually becomes a task for the ego, leads to a moderation of the nature of the original positing. Thus, in the second Introduction he insists that

it is not a *conceiving*; this it only becomes by contrast with a not-self, and through determination of the self within this opposition. Hence it is a mere intuition. . . . By the act described, the self is merely endowed with the possibility of self-consciousness, and therewith of all other consciousness; but no true consciousness comes into being as yet.⁵²

This is the reason for the wide discussion and controversy over the nature of the self-positing ego. Is it the positing of the reality of self-consciousness, as Henrich claims,⁵³ or a simple intuition as described above?⁵⁴ Is it an underlying substratum of all consciousness or does it permeate self-consciousness throughout?⁵⁵ Is it a claim about the practical nature of the self, or merely for the theoretical?⁵⁶ We have given our response to this question implicitly through the reconstruction of Fichte's text. We shall here expound our precise account of this question.

As we saw, Fichte's enterprise of the Deduction of the original self-positing develops mainly from the concept of substantiality, in quantitative terms, despite his introductory remarks which warn against anything 'subsistent'. Moreover, his successive attempts to give an account of synthesis is carried through the external introduction of new *concepts*, which appear themselves to be the bearers of the movement of his pedantic argumentation, rather than the promising dynamics of the process of productivity. In his later work, *Science of Ethics*, Fichte even claims the actuality of this original self-awareness, manifested in the whole ego as an impulse, a *primordial* momentum for absolute freedom. In fact, in our discussion we found it as the arrogant and naive level of consciousness of the absolute self-certainty of the self's pure autonomy, and its ability to

determine anything external to it. It is a concrete disposition towards itself and the world, that of claiming complete conformity of the latter to the subject. This act is infinitely performed, an infinite number of times, with each encounter of the self with the world, and thereby the self-consciousness of the self is the process and result of these experiences. However, since the nature of these experiences is exclusively self-centred, the nature of the thereby recollected self-consciousness is concomitantly static. It is the same, unchangeable self-consciousness, insensitive to its frustrations, now triumphant in the vanity of self-affirmation, now miserable in its self-refutation, but always stubborn and not susceptible to formation. Hence, the act of self-positing stands for both an underlying substratum of consciousness, and the reality of self-consciousness, and indeed for the transcendental condition of any activity. In fact, it does illustrate the 'reality of self-consciousness', as Henrich claims, albeit, in the opposite direction of Henrich's intentions, namely, in the exposition of the limited, marginal or even negative role that the process of self-consciousness may have with regard to the constitution of the self. For self-consciousness, viewed as a self-oriented goal, seems to give rise to the validation of the ego's self-assertiveness rather than to its formative *Bildung*. This is concomitant with the nature of the ego's activity. Fichte has been mainly presented as the philosopher of praxis. This sounds relevant since all experience is generated by and reduced to the act of freedom. However, this act is successfully described by Fichte as the activity of the *eye*, that is, a praxis of mere seeing, and indeed of self-mirroring, thus, a praxis with no formative strength for either the subject or the object, a *praxis from the secure distance of the beholder*. From this point of view, the unity of theoretical and practical Reason is indeed accomplished. In addition, the ability for this praxis is not given to anybody. It is something that the philosopher attains by means of logical abstraction and by those few who are able to discover it in themselves.

In the light of these conclusions, we can gain a wider perspective on the substance of Henrich's analysis. Henrich justifiably claims that it is necessary to situate the philosophical problems within their historical context. From this viewpoint, Fichte's insight is powerful indeed, as being critically located in the tradition of reflective theories, including Descartes, Leibniz, Locke and especially Kant. Moreover, exactly because, as Henrich points out, we have to treat philosophical issues historically, the central objection to Henrich's

orientation is that one cannot criticise the philosophy of *Existenz* from a subject-centred standpoint, as that advocated eminently by Fichte. For, it is the latter way of philosophising that renders the former as seemingly well-justified one. In other words, the defence of the reality of self-consciousness could only be sustained not from the standpoint of a static self-certainty, but from precisely the *refutation* of that standpoint, working through the way of despair of self-consciousness, and along with it, the tradition of philosophy itself.

Fichte's response to the Kantian question leads us to an exceptionally narrow field of the philosophical problematic. The Kantian dualism is raised by an act of monolithic identity: the relation of man with the world is dissolved in the illusory power of the self-positing ego, the aporia of judgement is settled in the primordial impulse for absolute freedom, the notion of subjectivity is exhausted by the obstinate self-certainty or the perennial striving for sheer autonomy. Fichte's overwhelmingly self-centred philosophy constituted the theme of a sharp critique by Schelling, to which we now turn.

Schelling's Notion of Experience: Introductory Remarks

In the previous chapter we dealt with Fichte's endeavour to resolve the basic Kantian question of the conditions for the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgements. For Kant, this issue was essentially reduced to the necessary assumption of the transcendental unity of apperception, along with the ability to schematise the derivative categories. The latter appears to have been completely ignored by Fichte, who focused his inquiry instead towards that area in which Kant remained silent; namely, the conditions for the transcendental unity of apperception itself.

In consequence, we have Fichte's resounding claim for the self-positing of the ego, an act intended to suspend the old dualisms and consequent impasses of reflection, an act monolithic enough in its overwhelming drive to dissolve these conceptual gaps.

It is in the same problematic that Schelling's Idealism originates, yet in such a way *as if* the Fichtean drive is but the impetus for his detachment from the subject-centred system.

Schelling is tormented by the philosophical problems of his age which surface as questions in his own work.

How do ideas of external things arise in us?

How it comes about that in us the object and the idea are inseparably united?

(Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature, 1797)

How a subjective is annexed thereto [i.e. to the objective], which coincides with it?

(System of Transcendental Idealism, 1800)

How could a system that unites intuition and concepts ever be conceivable?

(*Bruno or On the Natural and the Divine Principles of Things*, 1802)

The above questions receive various and differentiated responses, since Schelling's intellectual development is characterised by an exceptional multifariousness, as far as both the content and the form of his works are concerned. It is not the object of this project to give a thorough and systematic account of all the different phases of his thought and of the transitions between his intellectual transformations. We rather focus on illuminating those powerful dimensions of his thought that open new perspectives to our themes, but also, potentially, impinge on many areas of modern philosophical investigation, with regard to the relation between the Absolute and finitude, thought and being, epistemology and ontology, philosophy and mythology. Schelling's thought, which remained for many decades in the darkness of Hegel's overriding critique, far from being 'the night where all the cows are black', presents an extraordinary richness and uninvestigated resources, which our research broaches only in a preliminary and preparatory way.

As already mentioned in the Introduction, Schelling's originality consists in his radicalisation of the whole context and tonality of the debate around the conditions of cognitive experience, by transposing the aporias of logic from the realm of human subjectivity to the realm of cosmic becoming. As will be seen later, logic is considered itself as an immanent power among the infinite configurations and transmutations that the interaction of cosmic powers takes in a specific stage of the history of the engagement of man with the world. Through this idea, Schelling does not intend to develop an anthropological account, but simply to point to the historical dimension of the process of reflexivity: a history denoting man's rise from his immersion in natural forces, which to the extent that it becomes completely cut off from nature, acquires an arid and entirely abstract form. It is in the context of this abstracting separation of man from the worldly powers that the notion of the *condition* for the possibility of cognitive experience becomes a persistent theme in modern epistemology. The notion of the condition for the possibility of experience assumes the status of an isolating factor – by means of reflective abstraction from experience itself – which, as such, intends to found and justify knowledge. Schelling, by relocating logic within the realm of its origins, without dismissing logic's specificity, undermines its ability to found experience as a whole by means of an isolating, conceptual factor. For, if

logical thought is manifestation and part of cosmic spontaneity, it cannot found the realm of its genesis itself.

The question of justification and objectivity of knowledge, however, is not wholly discarded, but is implicitly readdressed by means of a different approach: objectivity relates to the known and unknown powers that enable and sustain the interaction between man and the world, and in this sense objectivity stands for both clarity and confusion, necessity and contingency. Objectivity is not transferred or imposed upon the subject's representations by means of its conceptual conditions, but rather seems to signify the very process of interaction between the real forces pertaining to man and the world, the real powers that seize upon consciousness and consciousness's active response to them. However, the problematic of forces still assumes a transcendental status, so long as it becomes itself the new condition for the comprehension of experience, even though the notion of experience now embraces the cosmic, and not only the subject's activity. In the first edition of the *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (PN) (1797), Schelling, by a philosophical explanation of the dynamic polarity of nature, sets out to demonstrate that the concepts of 'universal attraction and repulsion' must be 'conditions for the possibility of all objective knowledge'.¹ Indeed, Schelling deploys his early writings (1793–1804) from a transcendental standpoint, whose locus is his principle of Identity. This underlies the structure of his more important early writings, PN (1797), *System of Transcendental Idealism* (STI) (1800), *Bruno or On the Natural and the Divine Principles of Things* (1802), becoming the exclusive theme of his major project to articulate his Identity System (1801–4). The Identity principle takes on different forms through these works, until it becomes consolidated in its most clear form in the *System of Philosophy in General and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular* (1804), which will be discussed in detail later. We do not intend to provide here a thorough exposition of all the various forms of the Identity principle in the above works, though their main traits will be discussed in context. At present, we will provisionally provide a succinct formulation of the Identity principle, in order to see the connection with Schelling's early transcendentalism.

The notion of Identity in general is intended to constitute the highest principle which postulates the original identity of subject-object, spirit-nature, that has been split by reflection. At this stage, according to Schelling, philosophy's task is to demonstrate the ultimate identity between spirit and nature, thought and being. Hence the statement in the STI: 'The highest consummation of natural

science would be the complete spiritualising of all natural laws into laws of intuition and thought'² and correspondingly, for transcendental philosophy, its 'highest consummation' would be to prove the rise of nature from the spiritual realm. A philosophy of nature and a philosophy of knowledge are therefore seen as symmetrical philosophical accounts that in their supplementarity would demonstrate the original identity of nature and spirit, object and subject.³ To be sure, in both *STI* and *PN*, Schelling gives an interesting and dynamic account of both nature and subject. These are conceived in terms of polar forces, whose interaction and various dynamic balances result in the different forms of natural phenomena or subjective states. Their higher unity is conceived as an inclusive cosmic productivity, of operative, oppositional and interacting processes, in which man and nature are but different moments. The dualistic terminology of mind/matter, idealism/realism, is suspended by a dynamic approach according to which everything would be apprehended as an interaction of forces. In the *PN*, for example, concepts are conceived as forces in equilibrium (quantity), while sensations as different deviations of this equilibrium (quality). Reflection is taken as a state of upset equilibrium in man, where man's productivity is disconnected from nature's productivity. Identity is therefore assumed on the basis of the common nature of these forces, which is conceived in terms of *productivity*. However, at this stage, Schelling assumes a higher type of productivity which is characterised by an ideal balance, or indifference, between the two postulated oppositional forces, that constitutes the original and ultimate identity of all forms of nature and spirit. From this point of view, particularity and multiplicity are considered as mere modification of this highest identical principle. Accordingly, the process of productivity is abstracted from its vital and substantial, internal diversity and is reduced to the status of an identical and abstract concept, which, in turn, is rendered as the transcendental condition of knowledge. This line of thought culminates in the *System of Identity*, where Identity is no longer conceived in terms of productivity, but as an immediate, self-positing, absolute, total Oneness. This is postulated as the *essence* of all beings, which shines through them in their illusory particularity. Hence, any dynamism and relative independence of the particulars, implied by the previous model of forces, is dismissed since the particular is considered as a non-essential, a non-being, as merely the medium through which the Absolute manifests itself. The way that the Absolute shines through in the subject is, accordingly, named after intellectual intuition.

It is the notion of the absolute Identity between spirit and nature that sustains Schelling's early transcendentalism, for this principle allows nature's or thought's full transparency by means of intellectual intuition, which stands for the fundamental condition for all possible experience. In fact, this condition is even stronger and more substantial than the Kantian conditions of the formal categories of the understanding, since the latter apply only to phenomenal knowledge, while the former, dissolving the realm of noumena, renders the universe fully transparent. It is only after Schelling's radical rupture with the Identity System that he abandons his transcendental standpoint. This rupture can be traced to the *Of Human Freedom* treatise (1809) and was further pursued in the *Ages of the World* (AW) (1811) and the *Deities of Samothrace* (1815).

In these works, Schelling no longer seeks to establish the original and Absolute identity of nature and spirit, nor does he conceive the forms of cosmic becoming in mere dual terms. Now, he discovers the inexhaustible richness and multiplicity of the cosmic movement, which does not originate from an ideal state of primordial balance, but has always been as the recurrent or unpredictable, balanced or disorderly interplay of 'real powers'. These are seen as multiple, transformable or transmutable to each other, but not reducible to a common, identical, allegedly elementary constituent, nor derivable from a higher origin. In this context, the dynamism of his thought – previously restricted by the confines of the Identity principle – recovers its resources and acquires new dimensions: the *forces* are transformed into *potencies*, pointing to their autonomous and self-generative dimension, the potencies are transmuted into *gods*, pointing to the ineffable 'magic of insoluble life'. Logic is itself a potency of the cosmic becoming, a moment in the mystery of life itself, partaking of the paradoxical nexus of the powers of order and chaos. Being thus implicated, no logical abstraction can claim its right to condition or found experience, since its very production is itself brought about by the very powers it attempts to found. One could argue that this account is just another transcendental presupposition for the possibility of experience. Schelling, however, at this stage of his development, is not pursuing the foundation for a new system of knowledge. The thought process is no longer conceived as an act of conceptual abstraction from experience – which would ostensibly escape the contingent and whimsical character of the subjective – but as an activity of the living powers of man in his engagement with the cosmic powers. Considered thus, thought's products take on a *logogrific* expression rather than a

transparent, orderly and systematic classification of the world. However, the *logogrific* form, in its elusiveness and perplexity, seems to carry more cognitive weight than the clear and unequivocal universal and necessary concepts. For *logogrif* is woven by the real and intractable powers of a living experience – and thus re-enacts the paradoxical powers of the cosmic becoming – rather than by the conceptual distillation of experience, which thereby claims a pure and thus meaningless objectivity.

Here, we will explore Schelling's 'post-Identity' works, in particular, the *Of Human Freedom* treatise, the *AW* and the *Deities of Samothrace*, which are treated as a trilogy. We begin though, with a thorough investigation of his Identity principle as this has been expounded in his lectures at Würzburg (1804), the *System of Philosophy in General and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular* – which condenses in its most clear formulation the Philosophy of Identity – because the latter has been considered as the core of Schelling's philosophy.⁴ However, the Philosophy of Identity constitutes only a phase in the history of his versatile intellectual development, and any reduction of the latter to this phase misses the exceptional richness and complexity of his ever-transforming thought. In fact, as will be seen, it is Schelling himself who provides the strongest critique of his own philosophical concept of identity. This gives rise to new and imaginative investigations, emerging from his inquiries into the nature of human freedom and his provocative account of the notion of good and evil.

The rupture with the System of Identity and the problematic of the transcendental conditions of experience is accompanied by a break with the monotheistic conceptualisation of God, as an absolute, all-perfect Being, and a shift from the 'monotheism of Reason' to the 'polytheism of imagination'.⁵ Indeed, in the course of this research, we discern a paradoxically close connection between monotheism and the faith in Logic's ability to explain the world. It would appear as if the notion of the absolute, which monotheism cultivates, after God's withdrawal from the world, is appropriated by Logic itself in its claims to organise and illuminate this disenchanted world.⁶ The issue of the relation between modern logic and monotheism, which would constitute an interesting, though different project, will not be pursued here. We would merely emphasise that Schelling's decisive undermining of the notion of the absolute identity and transcendental logic is attained only in the *Deities of Samothrace*, where he discovers the fascinating messages of this 'mysterious polytheism'. For the reintroduction of the gods in the world renders it alive, dynamic, unpredictable, enigmatic

and yet not alien nor merely awe-inspiring, since none of the gods assumes an absolute status, but as multiple and transmutable, eternal and mortal, may even be partially discovered in man's living forces themselves.

Schelling's re-enchantment of the world announces an innovative union of knowledge and faith, clarity and riddle, and from this point of view, we consider the *Deities of Samothrace* a work of major philosophical significance rather than a marginal religious study. With these introductory remarks, we can now proceed to the further examination of Schelling's controversial, elusive and disturbing thought.

4

Identity Philosophy: Its Critique and Its Self-criticism

Schelling, despite the versatility of his thought, has been mostly registered in the history of modern philosophy as the philosopher of Identity *par excellence*, mainly due to Hegel's overwhelming critique. Therefore, we need to gain a view into this period of Schelling's philosophical development, with regard to Hegel's critique but also to its relative position within Schelling's thought as a whole. The Identity System was the focal point of Schelling's philosophical concerns for the short period of time during 1801–4, mostly built on the basis of Schelling's blatant reaction to the Fichtean system and possibly due to this, negatively determined by it.

In his *STI* (1800), Schelling has already introduced his concept of Identity, in terms of his notion of Absolute Synthesis occurring in Intellectual Intuition. Through the latter Schelling broached the idea that everything in the history of the cosmos has already been posited and the only task for the philosopher, towards getting knowledge, would be his attempt – by an act of imitation – to rehearse the most distinctive phases of the history of cosmos. The latter, since they are intended to be reproduced by the philosopher's mind, will inevitably constitute phases of the history of consciousness itself in the broader sense of the term.¹

In this sense, Schelling has already broken with the Fichtean model of intellectual intuition, inasmuch as his notion of intellectual intuition does not refer to the act of the self-positing of the individual ego but rather to the projection of the concept of Absolute Synthesis onto the multi-layered level of the human psyche. Our main point though, regarding the conceptualisation of intellectual intuition in the *STI*, is that Schelling introduces this term in a double sense, namely the *dynamic* and the *geometric* one. Accordingly, Intellectual Intuition is

conceived both as an ongoing self-reproductive activity that generates the different configurations in the process of the self-constitution of one's personality, and as the abstract concept that describes an already immediate, one-act play event of creation whose *limitations appear* as the different modes of consciousness. Hence, the first conception introduces intellectual intuition in terms of a dynamic, productive process in time, while the second depicts it as a static all-inclusive, closed totality whose determinations are but artificial delimitations of its uniform and homologous status. The latter is explicitly stated by Schelling when he parallels intellectual intuition with the concept of space in geometry:

Intellectual Intuition is for the latter (that is, philosophy) precisely what space is for geometry. Just as geometry would be absolutely unintelligible without spatial intuition, since all its constructions are simply different ways and means of delimiting that intuition, so all philosophy would be unintelligible without intellectual intuition, since its concepts are simply delimitations of a producing having itself as object, that is of intellectual intuition.²

However, so long as the philosopher rehearses, by means of imitation, this original act of absolute synthesis in order to recapture the compacted history of the cosmos, he himself re-enacts a moment of creation. If so, creation is no longer original but recurrent, and thus both temporal and eternal. According to Schelling, in the action of imitation the philosopher enacts his freedom in a creative way and therefore the abstract tautology $A = A$ is transformed into a synthetic one:

Now by intellectual intuition there arises for us the self, in so far as it is its own product, at once producing and produced. This identity between the self as producing and the self as produced is expressed in the proposition, self = self: since it equates opposites to itself, this is by no means an identical proposition, but a synthetic one. Thus the proposition self = self converts the proposition $A = A$ into a synthetic one.³

In the above sense intellectual intuition stands for the creative dimension that permeates the self's production and accounts for the diverse qualitative leaps throughout its activity. The different forms of consciousness in the *STI* seem to arise not as logical conclusions or

determinate inversions of the previous states, but rather by way of an inexplicable leap, a sudden act which raises the self in a new qualitative stage, such as the rise of the self from original sensation to productive intuition or from reflection to artistic creation. These transitions, as already mentioned, do not appear as necessary consequences; they may occur but also they may not, so long as the creative potential of intellectual intuition does not get expressed. In any case, the transitions imply the potential or actual qualitative differentiation of intellectual intuition and, from this point of view, they stand at odds with their comparison with the smooth quantitative transitions that occur by means of delimitations of a uniform space, such as the transition from an oblong to a triangle by the simple drawing of a straight line.

The tension presented above between the dynamic and geometric account of intellectual intuition not only permeates through the *STI* as a whole, but seems to follow Schelling's thought until it is resolved in favour of the geometric model in his *System of Identity*, to which we now turn in more detail. We will deal with the texts of the lectures delivered by Schelling during the winter of 1803–4, which were culled and published posthumously by his son, and are widely considered to be the most lucid and definite exposition of his *Identity Philosophy*.

Schelling expounds his thought following Spinoza's method, that is, in a rigid, axiomatic style. His introductory sections of the text focus on his attempt to refute 'Fichte's subjectivization', as well as dualistic or representational accounts of knowledge. Accordingly, knowledge does not consist in the correspondence between subject and object, nor in the arbitrary Fichtean appropriation of the object by the self-positing ego; instead 'there exists neither a subject as subject nor an object as object; but that what knows and what is known are one and the same, and consequently no more subjective than objective'.⁴ This One is called supreme knowledge, in so far as it is the eternal self-identity that recognises itself. This knowledge is called Reason and thereby Schelling claims the defeat of all subjectivisation of rational knowledge. In fact, Schelling by rejecting subjectivisation also refutes objectivisation, in so far as he denies the concept of object as standing opposed to subject. Both terms are characterised as fictional, one-sided representations of a primordial unity to which they both belong as dissolved. The previous account of knowledge derives from the fundamental law of Identity that dissolves the very distinction between epistemology and ontology, and thereby depicts simultaneously the state of immediate knowledge, namely Reason or Intellectual Intuition, and the state of the cosmos, which is Reason recognising itself. We will

focus our inquiry on the investigation of this concept of absolute Identity with regard to the controversial issue of the derivation of determinations from its infinite and undifferentiated status, since this constituted the area of severest criticism on Hegel's part.

Schelling seems to follow Spinoza, not only with regard to his method, but also as far as the content of his central ideas. Hence, he expounds the concept of Identity or Absolute along similar lines to Spinoza's conception of Substance: 'The Absolute is that which is, by virtue of its idea (that is, absolute self-affirmation), immediately is, or that whose ideal includes its Being and whose idea is thus the immediate affirmation of Being and not idea or Being in a discrete sense.'⁵

The Absolute is defined as that whose essence is identical with its existence, since its essence is considered as *causa sui*, self-affirmed, which as such, immediately generates and thus coincides with its existence. Concomitantly, Being, as existence, is defined in terms of absolute autonomy, sheer self-creation, while anything that is produced by another is defined as non-being. The concept of the Absolute embraces the whole universe and constitutes the very *essence* of each particular entity, which otherwise, as regards its *particularity*, is characterised as *non-ens*, non-existent:

We furthermore recognise the universal concept as that of a given particular only to the extent that this *particular* is being looked as the negation of the former, not as something in itself. The concept of *plant*, for example, is possible only to the extent that the latter is not adequate to the concept, that is, to the extent that the affirmed is not the universe, as is the affirming. For if we posit the particular as being entirely identical with, and dissolved into its concept, then this concept is also immediately the concept of the universe, that is an infinite and eternal form.

*What is essential in the plant other than the eternal procreation and affirmation of itself?*⁶

The above abstract provides us with the crux of Schelling's thought. He conceives of the Absolute in Spinozian terms, namely as an infinite, eternal creativity, as *self-creating agency*, but in turn, he compresses and rigidifies this activity, rendering it into a homologous, uniform act that is assigned to every particular as the abstract concept of its permanent essence. In this sense the particular does not exist in itself, since what exists in it is only its self-generative dimension, which, however, does not pertain to its particularity but to the Absolute. In this way,

Schelling misses the concrete conditions under which each particular entity forms and sustains itself, and confines himself only to the extraction of the *conceptual abstraction* of the act of self-creation that inheres in it, which in turn is conceived as a monolithic, identical, absolute substance. This position could perfectly match with a dualistic conceptualisation of the Absolute as an external Creator, who imbues finite entities with his *pneuma* that shines through them. However, Schelling insists on strongly demarcating himself from any version of dualism, aligning himself to the Spinozian thesis of immanence. The Absolute or God should be understood as the all-inclusive totality:

For the true philosophy, God is not the supreme but the unconditionally One, not the endpoint or the last link in a sequence but the centre. There is no world outside him to which he relates in the manner of cause and effect; for otherwise God would be determined by a law other than that of identity; . . .

Nothing can emanate from God, for God is everything, and He is characterised by no other relation than that of the eternal and infinite affirmation of Himself.⁷

Hence, if the particulars are thus dissolved in God, as non-beings in themselves, whence do they derive their particular status? It is at this point where we can see the celebration of the geometrical method. According to the text, the particulars are derived by means of various delimitations of the homologous, uniform totality of the immediate self-created act, or in other words, by means of various subtractions, removals from the totality. This is why the particular is defined as non-being, *non-ens*, as a mere *schema*; for, its essence is what is always there, the infinite self-procreation of the universe, while its particularity is just the specific form, the circumscription of the removal in each case, similarly as different shapes may be considered as being derived by various modes of delimiting – i.e. subtracting from – the totality of space.

Accordingly, the critical question arises: who makes the subtractions? According to Schelling, it is our intellect or imagination that performs them:

What do we generally understand when we speak of particularity? Even for a subordinate reflection, it is nothing in itself, not substance, but it is merely a form or an ideal determination. What makes the plant a plant is not a substance, for the plant shares substance with all other natural beings; conversely, the plant is neither

real nor something in and for itself, but it is strictly a concept or a schematism of the imagination.⁸

The intellect or the imagination, however, is in itself a creative particular, but Schelling does not provide any explanation for the emergence of this specific particular that seems to be responsible for the derivation of the rest. Here then, we reach the internal limits of Schelling's account. In fact, Schelling attempts to address this problem by means of the sudden introduction, in the final pages of the text, of the mechanism of potencies; the latter, though, lie in blatant inconsistency with the whole spirit of the rest of the text, since by the preponderance of any of the arising potencies, he reintroduces what he precisely tries to abolish throughout all his previous enterprise, namely the subject-object division. In addition, he does not offer any explanation for the origin of the so-called 'reciprocal domination of one factor over the other',⁹ and the consequent loss of equilibrium between the two potencies that would create particularity. Hegel's critique draws on this aspect, highlighting the strictly quantitative character of the potencies.

Hegel in the final Remark on the Quantity section in the *SL*, mentions that the understanding of Quantity as infinity through the concept of *quantitative infinity* misses the qualitative moment that appears even in the sphere of Quantity. So, alluding to Schelling's three potencies of the Identity System, he remarks:

The only further remark to be made here concerns the intrusion of quantitative forms into the pure qualitative forms of thought in philosophy. It is the relationship of powers in particular that has been applied recently to the determination of the Notion. The Notion in its immediacy was called the first power or potency; in its otherness or difference, in the determinate being of its moments, the second power; and in its return into itself or as totality, the third power. It is at once evident that power as used thus is a category which essentially belongs to quantum – these powers do not bear the meaning of the *potentia*, the *dunamiv* of Aristotle.¹⁰

Schelling, indeed, defines the potencies in quantitative terms:

Where the state of being affirmed has relative dominance over the other that of affirmation, and where the latter affirms this very affirmation, we speak of A¹; where the affirmation dominates, and where it affirms the affirming factor of the first power itself, we have

A^2 (A to the second power); where both of these, the affirmation of the affirmed (A^1), and that which affirms this affirmation (A^2), penetrate and reduplicate one another, we speak of A^3 or the power of indifference where the factors of A and B are reduced to a quantitative equilibrium.¹¹

Schelling, then, seems to try to save the particulars by means of the above pseudo-scientific proof, but he fails even to explain the sudden appearance of the originally balanced potencies in the axiomatically posited homologous and monolithic primal Identity. This objection sounds and is indeed a logical one, to which Schelling could perfectly riposte that the potential of its inexplicable and sudden self-division pertains precisely to the nature of this all-powerful Absolute. In this case, however, the claims about the Absolute's monolithic and immediate self-positing identity are self-cancelled and the only remaining meaning is but the postulation and the concomitant adherence to *faith* in the idea of a total, omnipotent Being.

We can now examine in more detail Hegel's critique, which is expounded in the Preface of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (PS) and more explicitly in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. In the preface of the PS the Schellingian Absolute is dismissed as the idea that 'sinks into mere edification and even insipidity', since 'it lacks the seriousness, the suffering, the patience and the labour of the negative'.¹² The latter, namely the labour of the negative, is succinctly exposed by Hegel in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* as follows:

What is lacking in Schelling's philosophy is thus the fact that the point of indifference of subjectivity and objectivity, or the Notion of Reason, is absolutely presupposed, without any attempt being made at showing that this is the truth.

... The true proof that this identity of subjective and objective is the truth, could only be brought about by means of each of the two being investigated in its *logical, that is, essential determinations* and in regard to them, it must then be shown that the subjective signifies the transformation of itself into the objective, and that the objective signifies its not remaining such, but making itself subjective.¹³[my emphasis]

According to Hegel, then, what is only postulated by Schelling in an abstract and static way, right from the beginning, should be proved by means of the movement of the Absolute itself. This consists in the

reflection of the Absolute upon its own internal negativity, in fact a logical movement that would generate the essential determinations, inherent in the Absolute and being possibly recollectable, as a result of this movement. Hegel in turn, applying his method in the *SL*, shows that the abstract concept of Infinity – that is, the way Schelling conceives of the Absolute in his Identity Philosophy – being deprived of internal finitedness is but a spurious conceptualisation of infinity.

Hegel, by reflecting the abstract concept of infinity upon itself, reveals its internal, logical, that is, essential determinations:

The infinite is; in this immediacy it is at the same time the negation of an other, of the finite. As thus in the form of simple being and at the same time as the non-being of an other, it has fallen back into the category of something as a determinate being in general – more precisely, into the category of something with a limit, because the infinite is determinate being reflected into itself.¹⁴

Hence Hegel, using the power of logic – to be sure not of a formal logic, but one of the laborious recollecting of thought-experiences – discovers the necessary determinateness of what is initially taken as indeterminate infinite. It is not surprising, then, that he wonders why Spinoza who discovered ‘true’,¹⁵ that is, determinate infinity, did not move further than the indeterminate conception of Substance, a critical point that Hegel equally applies to Schelling, in the context of his discussion of Spinoza’s philosophy: ‘This defect appears in Spinoza and Schelling in the fact that they see no necessity why the Notion, as the implicit negative of its unity, should make a separation of itself into different parts; so that out of the simple universal the real, the opposed, itself becomes known’.¹⁶

Hegel praises Spinoza for his insight into the concept of determinate infinity by interpreting Spinoza’s example of the notion of infinity, namely the case of the sum of the *inequalities of distance* between the circumferences of two non-concentric circles: the smaller one being inscribed into the other; the latter – infinite inequalities – though infinite, are yet delimited in the determinate space which is interposed between the two circumferences. Nevertheless, according to Hegel, Spinoza did not manage to properly develop his own speculative discoveries, similarly to Schelling’s inelaborate ‘truths’. However, it seems bizarre why Spinoza, who himself first introduced the idea of a determinate infinity and Schelling, who also developed the concept of infinite finitude in his *Bruno* essay (1802),¹⁷ failed to proceed to the

proper logical elaboration and retained the concept of an indeterminate absolute. Our suggestion is that the main critical issue with regard to Schelling's conception of the Absolute or Spinoza's Substance, regarding their undifferentiated infinite status, cannot be exhausted at the logical level, as Hegel suggests, namely to the inadequate unfolding of the logic of infinity as such. Instead, our suggestion is that their entrapment by the concept of absolute infinity should not be mainly traced to logical shortcomings but rather to their implicit embeddedness in the monotheistic tradition, despite their adherence to the concept of immanence. The latter, as such, does not necessarily imply the refutation of the compelling omnipresence of an all-powerful Being, so long as it does not move beyond the doctrinaire level. At this stage Schelling's re-enchantment of the world remains petrified, in so far as the essence of the particular is derived from the *law* of identity.

It is only when Schelling breaks with his monotheistic background, during his philosophical investigations from the *Of Human Freedom* essay up to the *Deities of Samothrace*, that the concept of immanence recovers its dynamism. At present, we need to examine the specific connotations of the concept of Infinity of the period in question and thus to assess the limits of Hegel's critique as well. To begin with, Hegel ascribes to Spinoza's Substance a concept of infinity that Spinoza held for another case, namely, his fourth case of infinity which refers to 'the thing which is called infinite in so far as its parts, although included within a maximum and a minimum, cannot be expressed by any number'.¹⁸

Schelling stresses that in his exposition of the concept of the Absolute refers to Spinoza's first, fundamental case of the infinite, which is considered as altogether different from the other cases, and applies to a being which is infinite by virtue of its essence:

The Absolute is unconditionally infinite. There are two forms of infinity: one that we ascribe to what we are capable of delimiting, e.g. space, time, etc. or what is infinite by its cause, such as the species in organic nature that are infinite by virtue of their cause. There exists another infinity, however, altogether different from the former two, that applies to a being by virtue of its definition, as Spinoza puts it, or by virtue of its idea. Such an infinity is that of God. For God is the absolute affirmation of Himself as infinite reality.¹⁹

Schelling here draws on Spinoza's elaboration of the concept of infinite, expounded in his *Letter on Infinite* (*Letter XII, to Louis Meyer*). In

this letter Spinoza attempts to address, by means of distinguishing among various cases – actually six – of infinity, ‘the causes of errors and confusions which have arisen of this question of the Infinite’.²⁰

The relevant issue for our discussion is try to gain a view into the qualitative difference of the first case of the infinite that applies to Schelling’s notion of Absolute. According to the latter, a thing is infinite by virtue of its essence. Infinite in this sense should be understood as the coincidence of essence and existence that may apply to an all-inclusive *causa sui*. In other words, a being infinite by its essence signifies its uninhibited, immediate self-positing in the entire expansion and intensity of its potential. Infinite in this case is not the non-finite, for this absolute positing has no relevance to any prior determination, and indeed that of a logical thought that would juxtapose it to finitude. A being that is considered as completely autonomous and self-created, simply exists as infinite, since it actualises by itself, immediately, all its potentialities. The law of Identity in this case stands for a claim on hierarchical priority of absolute power and indeed of one that cannot be fully grasped by our reflective capacities. The very fact that it can be thought does not annul its infinite status, but only attests to its various forms of manifestations, in this case, as thought itself that is immanent to the absolute substance. In this sense, Spinoza’s Substance could become intelligible only through two attributes – extension and thought – while its infinite attributes are incomprehensible. To be sure, through Schelling’s intellectual intuition, an immediate revelation of the Absolute could occur, but this still does not render it intelligible in terms of conceptual determinations. The latter rather depicts an overwhelming, usually terrifying and paralysing experience, as that described by the evangelists, transferring the feelings of perennial awe and humility.

In Schelling’s text, the Absolute stands for the eternal self-affirmation of God’s existence. As such, it is not opposed to anything for it includes everything. It never starts or ceases to be. Its existence has no duration, not because it is infinite in terms of time, but because it bears no relation to time whatsoever. Eternity thus is not defined in terms of time, as infinite is not defined in terms of finitude, for the Absolute stands for an act of power and necessity and not for a concept of speculation. The Absolute, far from being an empty logical universal in the beginning of an unelaborated thought process, rather appears as the fullness of the actualisation of all potentialities. The postulation of the Absolute then carries more the weight of religious intensity rather than the scientific rigour of geometrical rigidity. The latter, though,

seems to be indispensable for the validation of the former. In this sense, the notion of the infinite referring to the Absolute is qualitatively different from the other cases of the notion. The latter now fall within the area of conceptual understanding and, in Spinoza's context, are related already to the sphere of the modifications of Substance. Accordingly, Spinoza's example, as far as the fourth case of the infinite is concerned, was not a claim for the notion of the determinate infinite, which, according to Hegel, could be applied to Substance and thus initiate its divisibility. Instead, Spinoza's example was intended precisely in order to prove the indivisibility of substance. For the main point of Spinoza's case was to show that between a *maximum* and a *minimum*, there are infinite numbers or points, which attests to the *infinite continuity* of substance and therefore to its *indivisibility*. Moreover, for Spinoza, this case was also an example for the inability of our imagination to grasp the infinite that is always there, despite the limits that are formed by the schemata of imagination, anticipating the similarly inferior role that Schelling ascribes to imagination in the Identity System.

In the Identity Philosophy the Absolute stands for the static fulfilment and infinite satiation of a homologous and powerful totality. Now, as already mentioned, Hegel's suggestion is the conceptualisation of the Absolute in terms of its self-reflective becoming. The identity of the opposites then would be proved by means of the discovery of their inversion and of their alternating status in the process of their movement. In fact, the movement itself derives from the development of the contradiction between the opposites themselves. It is in this line of thought that Schelling develops his self-critique, the period during 1809–11, but in our view, in a much more interesting and richer way than Hegel's suggestion. For Schelling's movement does not develop in the safe means of thought-contradictions but in the provocative field of the contraries pertaining to God himself and thus to the surprising depths of the world and human soul. From this point of view, our final critical remark on Hegel is not only that he exhausted his critique of the Identity System to the logical level, but mainly that he reduced the complexity and differentiation of Schelling's philosophy to the short Identity period, neglecting all the previous and later phases of a restless and imaginative philosophical development. In fact, Hegel not only neglected, but also dismissed

Schelling's recurrent innovative changes throughout his long intellectual activity:

In the various presentations of his view Schelling on each occasion began from the beginning, because, as we may see, what went before did not satisfy him; he has ever pressed on to seek a new form, and thus he has tried various forms and terminologies in succession without ever setting forth one complete and consistent whole.²¹

However, what Hegel considers as a problem, seems to be, rather, Schelling's strength, especially as regards his radical ruptures with his own ideas and the elaboration of unexpectedly new thoughts.

We will now turn to Schelling's rupture with the Identity System through the examination of his self-critique, which inaugurates a new phase in Schelling's philosophy, starting from the *Of Human Freedom* treatise up to the *Deities of Samothrace*.

In the *Freedom* treatise, Schelling introduces his thoughts by demarcating himself from Spinoza's system. According to Schelling, the latter consists in a static pantheism, which although it conceives of things as immanent in God, in fact separates them and re-establishes mechanistic connections between them. This mode of thought was present in Schelling's Identity text, where he himself pointed out the distinction between *natura naturata* and *natura naturans*.

However, a more complete differentiation of things and God can hardly be conceived than is made in the teaching of Spinoza which is said to be the classic instance of that identification. God is that which is in itself and is conceived solely through itself; whereas the finite necessarily exists in another being and can only be conceived with reference to it. Manifestly, in consequence of this distinction, things are not different from God merely in degree or because of their limitations, as a superficial view of the doctrine of modes might indeed seem to reply, nor do they differ from God *toto genere*, thus whatever their relation to God may be, they are absolutely differentiated from God through the fact that they can exist only in and dependent upon another being (namely himself), and that their concept is a derivative one which would not even be possible without the concept of God.²²

According to Schelling, the main reason that leads Spinoza to this implicit dualism, is not his conception of immanence as such but his rigid distinction between the concept of Substance, as self-identical, and the concept of particular, considered exclusively in another.

The error of his system is by no means due to the fact that he posits all *things in God*, but to the fact that they are *things*, to the abstract conception of the world and its creatures, indeed of eternal substance itself, which is also a thing for him, . . . Hence the lifelessness of his system, the harshness of its form, the bareness of its concept and expressions, the relentless austerity of its definitions;²³

Spinozism in its rigidity then, is regarded like 'Pygmalion's statue, needing of being given a soul through the warm breath of love'. But even this comparison is imperfect, as Spinoza's more closely resembles 'a work of art which has been sketched only in its most general outlines and in which, if it were endowed with a soul, one would still notice how many features were lacking or incomplete'.²⁴

Schelling's concern is not only to animate the dead particulars and indeed by means of a self-reflective movement of the Absolute, as Hegel would suggest; but also to sketch a conceptualisation of God which would allow us to imagine the ineffable richness and paradox of the universe. God is no longer conceived as the all-perfect, omnipotent Being, as *actus purissimus*: 'God is more of a reality than is a mere moral world-order, and he has in him quite other and more vital activating powers than the barren subtlety of abstract idealists ascribe to him'.²⁵

Schelling, by expounding his new conceptualisation of God, in fact, presents the way he conceives the process of differentiation and individuation in the cosmic becoming. This is also depicted in terms of creation or God's self-revelation, which has usually been misinterpreted in strict theological terms. We will try to show that Schelling holds a more subtle and complicated meaning for the terms of creation and God himself, thereby opening new horizons in the problematic of the Absolute and finitude.

Schelling sets out a new conceptualisation of immanence, in terms of becoming:

The concept of immanence is completely to be set aside in so far as it is meant to express a dead conceptual inclusion of things in God. We recognise, rather, that the concept of becoming is the only one adequate to the nature of things. But the process of their becoming

cannot be in God, viewed absolutely, since they are distinct from him *toto genere* or – more accurately – in eternity. To be separate from God they would have to carry on this becoming on a basis different from him. But since there can be nothing outside God, this contradiction can only be solved by things having their basis in that within God which is not God *himself*, that is, in that which is the basis of his existence. [In footnote] This is the only correct dualism, namely a dualism which at the same time admits a unity.²⁶

Immanence, then, now signifies a process, a becoming of things considered both in God and distinct from him. God is understood as a being diversified in himself, as a becoming which constitutes itself the process of determination and individuation of beings. We need to dwell on Schelling's account of becoming in order to take a view on the specific way he conceptualises the process of determination:

If we wish to bring this Being nearer to us from a human standpoint, we may say: it is the longing which the eternal One feels to give birth to itself. This is not the One itself, but is co-eternal with it. This longing seeks to give birth to God, that is, their unfathomable unity, but to this extent it has not yet the unity in its own self. Therefore, regarded in itself it is also will: but a will in which there is no understanding, and thus not an independent and complete will, since understanding is actually the will in willing. Nevertheless it is a will of the understanding, namely the longing and desire thereof. . . . But there is born in God himself an inward, imaginative response corresponding to this longing, which is the first stirring of divine Being in its still dark depths. Through this response, God sees himself in his own *image*, since his *imagination* can have no other object than himself. This image is the first in which God, viewed absolutely, is realised, though only in himself; it is in the beginning in God and is the God-begotten God himself. This image is at once and at the same time, reason – the logic of that longing, [in Schelling's footnote] *in the sense in which one finds a Logos in Logogriphs*.²⁷ [my emphasis]

How are we to understand the above quotation? As a preliminary remark, Schelling's essay *Of Human Freedom* could be read in at least two possible ways. The first reading, viz. Heidegger's version, is in the light of the Identity System, which still leaves its traces in Schelling's present treatise. The second, which we will follow, is in terms of

Schelling's immediately later works, namely the *AW* and *The Deities of Samothrace*. In fact, Schelling allows for both readings, since he both carries elements of his previous system and performs a spectacular break with his own previous systems and concomitant traditional accounts of teleology, necessity and identity. At present, we will examine Schelling's account of determination through the second reading, trying also to show Schelling's ambiguities, until we gain the more mature elaboration of his thought in the *AW*. According to the quotation cited above, Schelling conceives of the process of determination in terms of the interaction between longing or love, the so-called will-of-depths and will-to-love, or Ground and Existence. Movement occurs by means of the contrary interplay between two principles, these two wills, both pertaining to the nature of things. The first, that of longing, is the desire and will that strives to spread away from itself towards expansive expression. This refers to indeterminate passions, impulses and desires that urge away from themselves, diffuse themselves and explode in a disoriented, mute mode. Schelling sees that in this longing itself there is born an 'inward imaginative response', the logic of this longing, the will-to-love. This second will, immanently born in longing itself yet *not identical with it*, is the stirring of love. The latter should be understood as the will, springing from longing itself, that wills to express, to actualise longing. This will, that takes over longing and gives it creative form, renders it explicit and sound. The will-to-love wants to establish longing by connecting it, by relating it to other beings, by giving it shape and holding it distinct and distinguishable. Hence, the will-to-love transforms the diffused and indeterminate darkness of primal longing into the light of its creative formation. In this self-bending movement longing reflects upon itself and forms its image. But this image is produced by the elliptical movement of a living force, which, in its self-touching, reverberates itself, and thus becomes a speaking image. It is in this sense that the will-to-love utters the word: in the gathering of dispersion through the becoming aware of the need to express longing. Yet this word is the word of an image, the longing's image of itself, the word of the 'Logos one finds in the *Logogriffs*'. The logos of the *Logogriffs*, however, is the logos of an anagram, of a riddle: the word of the image is the unity of the elusive articulation that an image may recall. The word of this image is the unity of the ineffable vibration of longing, which unfolds its mute density into the rhythms of its imaginative expression. This unity cannot be the unity of a fully transparent utterance of a concept of the faculty of the understanding in the Kantian sense. Instead, it is a

unity of a *logogrif* and therefore a unity that attempts to give a symbol for the indefinite complexity of longing. Longing translated into logos, longing seeing itself, can only give an allegorical and transitive unity. The *logogrif*, or the image, then, allows the variation of significance that can be grasped by whoever tries to decipher it, according to his own sense of longing and love. In this context, we can rethink the role of intellectual intuition, where the latter may now signify the self-image of longing, the enigmatic unity that the logic of the *logogrif* recalls. The word, the utterance of longing, the will-to-love, does not exhaust or moreover annihilate longing. Rather, it takes it over, with love, in order to express it, as the poem treats one's desires. The will-to-love is nurtured by longing, which always remains as the mainspring of movement.

In this context, Schelling gives a new meaning to the notion of Identity. Identity now stands for the becoming of creation out of the contrary intercourse between a will that strives for infinite expansion and the will that tries to form longing and to incorporate it in the nexus of beings. Identity also stands for the *moment* of formation of the longing, a moment of transient fulfilment. The copula 'is', then, signifies both the process of expression and the moment of actualisation. This double significance of Identity refers also to God's double meaning. Accordingly, God is conceived both as the becoming of the oppositional vital powers in him and as the moment of the celebration of love.

The will-of-depths, that is unexpressed longing, stands for the material out of which the will-to-love creates its deeds. The richer the longing and the stronger the will-to-love, the deeper the process of 'determination' and individuation. In this sense, the term determination does not signify a conceptual process of logical discriminations but the creative process of longing's self-formation. Now, the relation which is characterised by the prevalence of the will-to-love upon longing is called by Schelling, the Good. Instead, when longing does not retain the role of feeding love, resists its self-formation and denies its self-seeing, that is, denies its movement according to its own contradiction, it becomes blind, attempts to prevail upon love and is rendered Evil. These concepts, Good and Evil, need to be further explored, in order to gain some insight into Schelling's controversial concept of creation and thereby his account of determination. Schelling calls Good, the specific relation according to which the will-to-love

embraces, circumscribes and thus subordinates longing. This is also depicted by the image of the circle where the will-of-depths is in the centre, surrounded by the circumference, that is, the will-to-love. Hence, Good, for Schelling, is called the System in the form of this specific relatedness between the will-of-depths and the will-to-love; a relatedness of structure and hierarchy. Heidegger calls it the jointure of Being, which for him, also, represents the 'immanent lawfulness' of beings. Consequently, Evil seems to be that which attempts to overturn and threaten the System.

Here, the following critical questions arise. Does Evil, for Schelling, constitute an immanent act of creation itself, in fact a necessary one, so that becoming be sustained as such and love manifested at all? In other words, is Evil a relative concept with regard to the System of Good and as such, a condition for love and becoming? Or is Evil an act against creation, an activity to be discarded and expelled, as darkness should be sundered from light? The approach to this question depends on the way we conceive the relation between the two wills, Ground and Existence, and thereby the concept of God. Schelling himself develops, in our view, contradictory thoughts throughout the *Freedom* essay, until he eventually, in the last section, elucidates, in a fruitful way, his concept of Identity and Indifference, preparing the way for the AW. Accordingly, if the relation between the two wills is conceived as one of primal identity, God is conceived as a primordial act of original self-revelation. In turn, the process of becoming of things in him is rendered a teleological movement towards the revelation of God, which is assumed as their hidden, inner, universal essence. Schelling allows for this reading, in so far as the One that longs to give birth to itself is understood as a uniform essence, immanent in the depths of things. Also, his attribution to the will-to-love of the name of universal will, enhances this reading.

However, Schelling explicitly stresses in the last pages of the treatise, the non-identity of the wills and yet the possibility of their becoming identical. This is to be understood in the context of Schelling's final remarks on Indifference. Here, he considers the two wills as two equally eternal beginnings. Darkness and light, reality and ideality, Good and Evil, take meaning only so long as these two wills stand in a 'relation'. Only within a systematic unity can the above concepts acquire their meaning. Antitheses exist by virtue of this relation and in this way constitute and define unity, indeed a polar, oppositional and moving one. Becoming itself cannot take place except through the movement which exists by virtue of the relation between those contraries. Good takes its meaning with regard to Evil and light with regard to darkness, as none of

these characterisations exist in themselves. Hence, Good is defined as the specific structure of the preponderance of the will-to-love over the will-of-depths. The latter, though, should not be understood as a static or ultimate one. Longing which sustains this structure is but the indispensable, disquieting energy which yet threatens this structure, maintaining thus becoming. This undermining potency is indeed disorganising and disruptive: it threatens the previous balance with chaos and disorder, so long as it challenges or even dissolves it. At this stage, longing is *called* Evil. However, Schelling keeps the concept of Evil, not for the disquieting, overturning longing, but only as long as the latter *establishes itself* upon the will-to-love and *reverses the system*. Evil then, is again System, in so far as it stands for a static structure, that is, the reversal of the Good. We can therefore say that, as long as there is a continual domination of one will upon the other – a permanent hierarchy in the form either of order or chaos – then we implicitly have the notion of a systematic stagnation, pertaining either to static order or to entropy. In contrast, the concept of becoming assumes none of the previous fixation of roles of the wills, but presupposes the alternation and moreover the free activity of the wills in the process of their interaction. It is precisely the dimension of *freedom* that is implicated by the conceptualisation of the will in terms of two equally eternal beginnings. The polarities of Good and Evil, darkness and light, are interchangeable not only by virtue of their interrelatedness, according to a logic of heterodetermination, or inversion, but also, according to Schelling, by virtue of the moment of Indifference, inherent in their relationship. Indifference is characterised as the groundless, that which abstains from any relation, or predicate and thus from any antithesis. This dimension is what ascribes to each will a freedom of itself, a potential of an unprecedented power by means of which old structures dissolve and movement maintains itself, not only in the pattern of inversions, but possibly in new unpredictable paths. The groundless then, is not a stage of abysmal night *before* creation, as it has been interpreted,²⁸ but rather the dimension of freedom and unpredictability pertaining to every will, as eternal beginning, within the very nexus of relations with its other.

Reality and Ideality, darkness and light, or however else we wish to designate the two principles, can never be predicated to the groundless as *antitheses*. But nothing prevents their being predicated as non-antithesis, that is, in disjunction and each *for itself*; wherein, however, this duality (the real twofoldness of the principles) is established.²⁹

These two wills are considered to be of the same 'nature', namely that of will or potency, as we will see in the *AW*. This does not, however, imply their original identity, but only their ability to transmute or transfigure one into the other, while maintaining their difference and independent dynamics, exactly because they are considered as real potencies rather than as mere concepts.

Heidegger's interpretation of Schelling's treatise develops from the standpoint of the Identity System. Heidegger's first application of his thinking in terms of identity lies in the identification of longing with the will-to-love. The latter is but the very essence of longing itself, except that it remains hidden in its depths: 'the ground as longing seeks precisely what the understanding sees'.³⁰ Accordingly, for Heidegger, the process of becoming consists in the striving of longing to discover the inner unity which hides in its depths. This is also the deeper essence of every entity, which is considered as God's Being. God is still conceived as becoming – since Schelling does not allow any ambiguity on this issue – but now understood in terms of the movement towards the revelation of this hidden unity, through the clearing and separation of light from darkness. This fits with Heidegger's interpretation of God – also-called Existence in the text – as an act of primordial revelation and original unity before any creation: 'Existence is the primordial and essential self-revelation of God in himself before the eternal act of creating things'.³¹

Creation, then, is but the process of revelation of the inner essence of things, that was originally revealed in God's Being, but then seems to have been buried in the dark depths of beings. In this case though, Heidegger should provide us with an account of Fallenness from the presumed original unity, which would also raise his inconsistency with his account of longing as both fundamentally identical with understanding and yet something to be cleared off. However, Heidegger does not engage with the inconsistencies of his interpretation, since his main concern seems to be the elucidation of the relation between the Absolute and things, which presumably demonstrates Schelling's adherence to the concept of the Absolute.

The thinghood of things consists in revealing the nature of God. To be a thing means to present God's Being, which is an eternal becoming, itself a becoming. . . . This interpretation of thinghood, however, is also a presupposition for correctly understanding what

Schelling is trying to say in the statement that the being of things is a becoming. He does not mean that platitude that all things are continuously changing. Nor does he mean that external ascertainment that there is nowhere at all in the world a state of rest and things do not have *being*. Rather, the statement means that things, of course, are, but that the nature of their being consists in actually presenting a stage and a way in which the Absolute is *anchored* and *presented*.³²

Therefore, the Absolute in Heidegger's reading stands first as a primordial, pre-temporal act of God's self-revelation and then, consequently, as a *telos*, which is reflected through the becoming of things towards their primordial essence. The 'Absolute is anchored' means that the ultimate goal always shines through the striving of things to reveal their essence and thus God's Being. Accordingly, creation is reduced to the unity which the understanding, the logos of the longing, brings about. The utterance of the word is but the revelation of the inner lawfulness, the so-called jointure of Being, which lies hidden even in that which appears as unruly:

This word co-responds to the ground in the ground. Ground and existence in their unity, the jointure of Being is uttered. Into what? Into the other, what God is not as he Himself is, into the ground, the unruly and *what is yet ordered in a hidden way*, what is still present without gathering. . . . Ground and Existence are each in their way the totality of the Absolute, and as such they belong together and are inseparable. *What longing insisting upon itself wills is the same as what the word of the understanding wills and raises to the clearing of representing*.³³

In Heidegger's reading, creation is conceived as the teleological movement towards the revelation of the inner lawfulness of beings, which seems to necessitate the separation of darkness from light, the clearing of order from chaos, logic from longing. Having thus reconstructed Schelling's account of creation, Heidegger criticises Schelling for excluding the opposition between ground and understanding from the realm of beings as a whole, and thereby for his alignment with the tradition of Western thought, the tradition of separation of *Logos* and Being and the sequential forgetfulness of the latter:

But when the system is only in the understanding, the ground and the whole opposition of ground and understanding are excluded

from system as its other and system is no longer system with regard to beings as a whole. That is the difficulty which emerges more and more clearly in Schelling's later efforts with the whole of philosophy, the difficulty which proves to be an impasse. And this impasse is evident since the factors of the jointure of Being, ground and existence and their unity not only becomes less and less compatible, but even driven so far apart that Schelling falls back into the rigidified tradition of Western thought without creatively transforming it.³⁴

Hence, according to Heidegger, Schelling's elusive account of cosmic becoming is reduced to the teleological movement of beings towards the revelation of their hidden essence, and the thereby revelation of God; this reconstruction allows Heidegger to classify Schelling in the traditional rank of the German Idealist thinkers whose thought develops from the standpoint of the Absolute rather than finitude.

Schelling's account of system and creation, however, is at odds with Heidegger's interpretation of it, which narrows the process of creation to the systems of the understanding and the expulsion of the unruly. Ground, as the-will-of depths, is neither a foundation of the will-to-love, which as such should be wholly appropriated by it,³⁵ nor its 'corrupting principle',³⁶ to be discarded for the revelation of the inner essence of things. Ground and Existence neither signify nor separate ontological phases, and moreover, their relation is not conceived in hierarchical terms, so that Ground should either become Existent or it should be cleared. Instead, as we have seen, these terms stand for the mutually interacting and relatively independent wills in the cosmic movement, which both feed each other, and do not exclude, neither exhaust each other. The latter account derives only from Heidegger's initial assumption of the identification of the understanding with the 'inner law' of longing. This, though, is to be found not in Schelling's essay but in Heidegger's own conception of the primordial identity between Being and logos, expounded in his lectures, *An Introduction to Metaphysics (IM)*. Here, Heidegger claims the essential sameness of Parmenides' and Heraclitus' thought, as long as both – implicitly or explicitly – announce the primordial identity of logos and Being. The latter is founded on the common conception of logos and Being in terms of emerging, self-gathering power. In the same way, Heidegger identifies understanding and longing, since what essentially longing seeks is to find its essence through its self-gatheredness. This, however, hardly fits with Schelling's far more complicated account of the two inseparable and yet irreducible wills. Moreover, Schelling does not ascribe any

ultimate inner lawfulness or inscribed order to the movement of things, as we will see in the *AW*. In this context, Ground and Existence are but the conceptual terms that describe the rather unpredictable movement of various potencies in cosmic becoming, inhering simultaneously in every entity, in a process of mutual transformation, conflict and free play.

Schelling eloquently emphasises the inevitable inability to discover an ultimate order in the 'irreducible remainder', the enigmatic unruly that lies in the depths of beings. This, however, is not to be 'cleared' by the understanding and thereby excluded from beings as a whole; rather the opposite is the case: for Schelling the unruly constitutes the fruitful soil out of which the will-to-love originates and, as such, is the 'sublime mother' of the understanding:

All birth is a birth out of darkness into light: the seed must be buried in the earth and die in the darkness in order for the lovelier creature of light should rise and unfold itself in the rays of the sun. Man is formed in his mother's womb; and only out of the darkness of unreason (out of feeling, out of longing, the sublime mother of understanding) grow clear thoughts.³⁷

Finally, Heidegger's reduction of creation to the systems of understanding, is but the preparation which enables him to apply to Schelling his general pattern of criticism on German Idealism, namely, the shrinking back from a position that potentially betrays human finitude – presumably the notion of Ground in this text – to the infinity of the understanding – the notion of Existence – as the allegedly ultimate revelation of God. Heidegger's fixation on this idea precludes his seeing the subtlety of Schelling's account of the Absolute and Indifference. Hence, he only sees – in a very Hegelian way indeed – in Schelling's concept of Absolute the lack of predicates, whose impressive significance is that it renders the Absolute a nugatory notion, allowing thus the celebration of the concept of finitude:

The highest unity is that of the Absolute. . . . In such a unity no duality can be discernible yet. Thus the unity is 'absolute indifference'. The only predicate that can be attributed to it is its lack of predicates. Absolute indifference is nothingness in the sense that

every statement about Being is nothing with regard to it, but not in the sense that the Absolute is nugatory and merely of no use. Here, too, Schelling does not see the necessity of an essential step. If Being in truth cannot be predicated of the Absolute, that means that the essence of all Being is finitude and only what exists finitely has the privilege and the pain of standing in Being as such and experiencing what is true as beings.³⁸

As long as the Absolute is declared nugatory, Heidegger deprives finitude of its infinite dimension, fixing it as radically opposed to infinity and thereby performing himself that which he ascribes to Schelling and to the whole of the Western tradition. Instead, Schelling's account of Indifference, as we will see in more detail in the *AW*, can give new insight and dynamism to the notions of Absolute and finitude, dismissing the prejudice with or the obsessive adherence to both concepts.

5

Schelling's Dynamic Account of the Absolute and Finitude

Despite Hegel's and Heidegger's monochromatic interpretations of Schelling's thought, his conception of Identity is diffused throughout his various works and in many different versions, as if the concept itself undergoes multiple transmutations. Indeed, Schelling develops his philosophy in a surprisingly versatile way – now characterised as kaleidoscopic, now as inconsistent – which is exceptionally interesting and diversified with regard both to form and terminology. In the previous chapter, we examined Schelling's monolithic account of the Absolute, during his Identity System phase. It is the aridity of this period that justified Hegel's overwhelming critique and also Heidegger's simplified interpretation of Schelling's *Of Human Freedom*, along with the consequent classification of Schelling under the category of the defenders of the notion of the Absolute. In this chapter, we will try to get a purchase on Schelling's dynamic and original account of the concept of the Absolute and finitude as the latter have been elaborately expounded in the second draft of the *AW*.

We start our investigation by following up the main line of Schelling's critics with regard to his concept of the Absolute. First, we will look briefly at his intellectual wanderings before the solidification of his thought into the Identity System, where we can already discern the potential of his dynamic and elusive thought which reaches its richest expression and ongoing transformation throughout his middle works, *Of Human Freedom* (1809), the *AW* (1811–15) and *The Deities of Samothrace* (1815).

In his early work, *PN* (1797, 1802), Schelling conceives the Absolute as an ongoing becoming of continuous self-division and differentiations which produce the infinite particularities. The act of eternal self-division is called *subjectivity*, or 'the unknowable infinitude hidden

therein', terms intended to refer to the mystery of productivity, to the initiations of infinite differentiations and to the battle of forces inherent in all natural processes.

This [the birth of things] does not take place through the intervention of stuff or matter, but through the eternal self-division of the absolute into subject and object, whereby its subjectivity, and the unknowable infinitude hidden therein, is made known in objectivity and finitude and turned into something.¹

Matter, for example, is conceived as a dynamic and fragile equilibrium of forces, which may be broken at any moment by the very forces that produce it, as the various chemical and physical phenomena attest to. Combustion, or magnetism, for example, are only manifestations of those dramatic breakdowns of equilibrium and the victorious predominance of the strong forces of cohesion or attraction respectively. This conflict of free forces, which above was named subjectivity, is also called contingency and constitutes the very process of nature's activity.²

For when once the first step has been taken, from the necessary to the contingent, it is certain that Nature does not remain on any lower level if she can advance to a higher one. But for this it is sufficient that she simply permits a free play of the forces in matter, it is also not impossible that some third thing (whatever it may be) should make this conflict of free forces permanent, and that matter (now a work of nature) should thereby find this continuance in this very conflict itself.³

Accordingly, the whole material Universe branches out from the highest unities into particular universes, because every possible unity again breaks up into other unities, of which each can appear as the particular one only through continued differentiations.⁴

A great deal of controversy surrounds the 'beginning' of the process of division, a controversy which remains so long as the Absolute is considered as an original state of indifference.⁵ However, the positing of the question itself – namely, how does differentiation begin – assumes a misapprehension of Schelling's subtle concept of indifference and its further elaboration in his middle writings. Moreover, it separates the Absolute

from its activity, while it is precisely this very activity that Schelling calls 'Absolute': 'For through this very act in which the Absolute makes known its unity in diversity, every unity formed in the particular has the necessary endeavour to be in itself, and to make knowable the essence in the particularity or nature of its identity as such.'⁶

Although Schelling has already introduced the meaning of indifference in his *PN*, it is only in the *Of Human Freedom* essay and the *AW* that we can reach a deeper understanding of this controversial term. In the *PN*, we meet the concept of the Absolute as the becoming of diversified forms by means of its self-division, mixed with the peculiar clothing of its essence in form, which sounds indeed suspicious, recalling a *prima materia*, a primordial substance, or a Neoplatonic form that takes on different shapes. However, the term 'essence' seems to hint at a much more dynamic and rather elusive idea, that of the *world-body*. The latter attempts to grasp the unbegun and unendable, namely, the eternal history of each particular finitude; a history woven by its invisible, unimaginable and unpredictable transfigurations and relations. The term 'world-body' or 'Idea' signifies the infinity of the potentialities that are latent in any manifest, concrete individuality. From this point of view, such concrete individuality is named a relative identity, in the sense of actualising – at a specific time – a concrete potentiality, realising thus, relatively, its potential. Hence, the world-body encloses the pulses of the world, recalls the ultimate interdependence⁷ among ostensibly unconnected things: '... but in so far as the whole is likewise reflected as form in this relative identity, so that even in appearance they are still Ideas, they are bodies that are simultaneously worlds, that is, *world-bodies*'.⁸ In this context, indifference does not signify lack of distinction; rather, it includes all the differences in their infinite potentialities. But if this is so, how does the concrete actuality come about, or how – out of the infinite potentialities that are assumed to remain indifferent to one another – does a concrete different form emerge? Schelling's exploration of these problematics is to be found in the *AW* and the *Of Human Freedom* essay.

To begin with, Schelling does not assume any original state of indifference which starts suddenly to differentiate itself. If the latter were the case, then he would assume a dichotomous approach between the existence of things and its origin. As we have seen in the previous chapter, in the *Of Human Freedom* essay, he discusses the issue in terms of the 'old distinction'⁹ between 'Being in so far as it exists and Being in so far as it is the mere basis of existence'.¹⁰ Here, Schelling starts to elucidate his dynamic account of the Absolute and its relation to

finitude. God is not the Highest Being, the omnipotent causal power of any finite being. Neither is he identical with things, as a simplistic version of pantheism would suggest. Nor, yet, do finite things differ from God in the manner of Spinoza's lifeless system. Schelling clearly demarcates himself from a concept of immanence 'in so far as it is meant to express a dead conceptual inclusion of things in God'.¹¹ He recognises, rather, that the 'concept of becoming is the only one adequate to the nature of things',¹² where things are both in God and distinct from him, and where God is both the becoming of things and distinct from them. 'This is the only correct dualism, namely a dualism which at the same time admits a unity'.¹³

Differentiation, then, never started at a definite beginning of the history of time, nor was there ever a primordial cause of finite things:

In the cycle whence all things come, it is no contradiction to say that that which gives birth to the one, is, in its turn, produced by it. There is here no first and no last, since everything mutually implies everything else, nothing being the 'other' and yet no being without the other. God contains himself in an inner basis of his existence, which, to this extent, precedes him as to his existence, but similarly God is prior to the basis, as this basis, as such, could not be if God did not exist in actuality.¹⁴

In his later work, the *AW*, Schelling clearly states the unthinkability of any original beginning of the cosmos:

If, however, the true ground and beginning is also a knowledge or science of the past, where is there a stopping point? For even when it arrives at the last visible thing, spirit still finds a presupposition that indicates a time when there was nothing but the one inscrutable, self-sustaining essence, from whose depths all has come forth. Furthermore, if this is considered in the proper spirit [*recht im Geiste*], new abysses would be discovered in it as well. It would not be without a certain kind of horror that spirit would finally recognise that even in the primordial essence itself, something had to be posited as a past before the present time became possible, and that is precisely this past that is borne by the present creation, and that still remains fundamentally concealed.¹⁵

The abyss, rather than being an undifferentiated One, is the crucible of the most different fermentations, a moment of an infinite becoming,

remote and unrecognisable by our conceptual categories. Moreover, by the term 'abyss', Schelling brings about a rupture with the concept of foundation, either in the form of the Cartesian *cogito*, or in the form of the empirical ground of beings. Both versions of ground – which are indeed supplementary – constitute a dualistic account of the relation between man and world, which sustains and regenerates itself in a rigidified categorial system, usually named as representational attitude.

The introduction of the notion of the abyss attempts to challenge this attitude. The concept of abyss refers to an indeterminable variable – at least in terms of fixed and clear concepts – and aspires to describe the experience of the Fall from the realm of our established subjective categories. However, this fall leads neither to empty space, nor to the ground of our sensible impression of the world. The abyss, in the context of Schelling, is an elusive claim for the groundless, self-sustaining mutuality between man and world, as well as the experience of this mutuality. It can be the experience both of panic and relief, of loss and finding, of disorder and new certainty, which we might get through the awareness of this inextricable mutual conditioning between man and world. The abyss is both paralysing and liberating in so far as it mocks the severe claims of Reason for certainty and autonomy.

It is a *concept* that attempts to categorise the indefinability of our conditioning, the remoteness of primordial and present determinations. It is also the confession of the inability of the human intellect to torment itself with its perplexity in thinking immemorial, infinite time and the consequent solution to the perplexity with its fixation under a new concept. The irony, though, is that it is now the concept of the abyss itself that seeks to become the new foundation. It is in this – usually Neoplatonic – context of thinking where concepts such as abyss or eternity lose their fluidity and elusiveness and become rigid frames, which accommodate the notion of Schellingian indifference. Accordingly, 'indifference' itself becomes the 'ground' anew and not surprisingly meets – after a short traversal through the history of philosophy – the principle of identity in its Cartesian or Fichtean version proper.

It seems though, that it is the fate of some intriguing concepts to acquire such autonomy – by virtue of their indeterminacy – so that they can raise themselves against the text and move alone in shadowy paths. The concept of the abyss definitely belongs here.

Dealing with Schelling implies the inevitability of following these paths. To read Schelling is to embark on an intellectual and even emotional venture, especially with regard to his later philosophical investigations in which he retrieves the language of ancient myths, oracles and symbols. The *AW* can be read as a modern Creation myth, except that creation in this work never starts or finishes, but begins and dies at any moment and eternally.

However, if this work is but a story, a new myth, then why should we take it seriously at all? It is here that we need to consider Schelling's implicit suggestion for the abolition of the barriers between faith and knowledge. In this work, Schelling simply thinks about the unconditioned. His suggestion seems to be that, when we think of the unconditioned, we do not necessarily reach impenetrable dead ends; instead, we can create stories, myths and surmises (*εικώτες μυθους*),¹⁶ which are certainly full of antinomies and paradoxes, but nonetheless, we can do it endlessly. For man himself is part of the 'unconditioned' in the moments of his re-enactment of the act of creation, in the special experiences where man regenerates the paradox of life and death that permeates his own mode of being. Man's 'nexus of living forces', imagination, reason, creativity are but moments in the paradoxical unity of the history of becoming.

Man must be granted an essence outside and above the world; for how could he alone, of all creatures, retrace the long path of developments from the present back into the deepest night of the past, how could he alone rise up to the beginning of things unless there were in him an essence from the beginning of times? Drawn from the source of things and akin to it, what is essential of the soul has a co-science/con-sciousness (*Mitt-Wissenschaft*) of creation. . . . Man often sees himself transposed into such wonderful relations and inner connections through precisely this innermost essence, such as when he encounters a moment in the present as one long past, or a distant event as if he himself were witness to it!¹⁷

Man can think and even play with the 'unconditioned' for, in a way, he witnesses the moment of 'Creation', since he eternally recreates himself; he himself is a form of self-generation. This is the case, in different forms and degrees, for any finitude, but above all in man, where we meet the most advanced manifestation of the so-far-known self-generative abilities of spiritual life.

We now turn to a closer discussion of the text AW, for in the latter we find Schelling's most fruitful and illuminating exposition of his account of the concept of the Absolute, but also of finitude. This will be explored through the ages of the world, namely, the history of time.

From the early pages of the essay, Schelling attempts to clarify his position as far as the relation between the Absolute and finite entities is concerned. Here, he seems to have taken into account his critics referring to the inexplicable derivation of finite entities from the supposed state of undifferentiated restfulness:

Now the great riddle of all times originates precisely here, the riddle of how anything could have come from what is neither externally active nor is anything in itself. And yet life did not remain in that state of immobility, and time is just as certain as eternity. Indeed, to the casual glance, the latter even seems driven out by the former; a world full of movement, full of conflict and strain of all forces seems to have taken over the place where the highest indifference, eternal rest, and universal satiation once dwelt.

There have always been those who claimed that this riddle was easy to solve. The unconditioned, they say, is at first purely in itself, devoid of externalisation and hidden; but now it steps out, externalises itself, and sublates its eternal indifference by itself. But these are words without sense. It is a founding and principal rule of science (though few know it) that what is posited once is posited forever and cannot be sublated again, since otherwise it might just as well not have been posited at all. If one does not remain steadfastly by what one has once posited, then everything will become fluid as it progresses, and everything will wear away again, so that in the end nothing really was posited. True progress, which is equivalent to an elevation, takes place only when something is posited permanently and immutably and becomes the ground of elevation and progression. Thus, either *the highest is not a restful will (such as we have assumed)*, or it is one. If it is one, then it must also eternally remain as such from itself. For it is entirely incomprehensible how the highest could cross over from rest into motion. Thus it can neither emerge from itself, nor can it separate off or exist as something from itself, nor can it produce anything outside of itself.¹⁸

So Zeno's abolition of the concept of motion and change is perfectly consistent with his teacher's, that is, Parmenides, assumption of the undifferentiated One, only that the latter is rather in blatant contrast to Schelling's Absolute. The latter is now expounded in its most mature form. Schelling no longer uses the terminology of forces. These may recall – even though Schelling never uses the term in this sense – a mechanistic reification of the deeper, inward drive of activity. Schelling here introduces the term of the will. The Absolute initially is conceived in terms of a *will that produces itself* and this is precisely the way *time* acquires its definition; namely as *organic process*. It is worth remarking that Schelling, in order to expound his account of the notion of the Absolute, or the Unconditioned, first introduces the manner in which he perceives the movement of the finite entities. The Absolute, in turn, will be conceived precisely through the paradoxical movement of the finite, in its multiplicity and transformative productivity.

Schelling distinguishes in every entity the two principles which characterise time. One principle is that which negates expression and formation and stands for the selfless, objective dimension, which Schelling calls *being*. The other principle, which is called *what-is*, is that which affirms the entity's expression and fulfilment, and stands for its subjective dimension. Both, though, are pure categories that never operate as such. The above principles simultaneously govern any entity's development or decay and it is by virtue of their enduring contradiction that motion exists at all. Time is defined in terms of these contradictory principles:

Whoever takes time only as it presents itself feels a conflict of two principles in it; one strives forward, driving toward development, and one holds back, inhibiting (*hemmend*) and striving against development. If this other principle were to provide no resistance, then there would be no time, because development would occur in an uninterrupted flash rather than successively; yet if the other principle were not constantly overcome by the first, there would be absolute rest, death, standstill and hence there would again be no time.

... the principles we perceive in time and the authentic inner principles of all life, and contradiction is not only possible but in fact necessary.¹⁹

In fact, these two principles are but configurations of the will, for both are considered as principles of action, negative or positive, but in either

case determinations pertaining to activity. Time exists by virtue of change, which derives from the oppositional, polar principles under discussion. Here, change and movement do not assume any formal uniformity and universality, which, correspondingly, would imply a mechanistic construction of the concept of time. Instead, Schelling brings forward the *organic nature* of time. Although he does not further elaborate this idea, we can infer from the text the way in which Schelling ascribes the term 'organic' to the concept of time. At first glance, we could ascribe to Schelling – as is usually the case – a naïve reduction of the cosmos to the activity of an organism, whose rhythm, accordingly, would define the concept of time. However, this vitalistic concept of time, associated with the homogeneity and uniformity of the biological cycle, would not make any substantial difference to the mechanistic model. What is needed is an interpretation of the term 'organic' that would accord with its derivation from the term *organon*. The latter term has a double meaning: it means *instrument*, signifying passivity, objectivity; it also means *εργον*, that is, product, production, that which pertains to activity and subjectivity. Both meanings are derived from the past participle, *εργα*, of the verb *εργω*, which means to work, to produce. The past perfect tense in ancient Greek has indeed a double, paradoxical sense of both passivity and activity that is transferred to the double meaning of its derivative word, *οργανον*. We do not know if Schelling was aware of the double operation of this term, but it seems to correspond precisely to the double dimension of the plastic will operating in life, that both posits and is posited, stands for both *what-is* and *being* and thus allows for the organic nature of time. These principles, as wills, as organic forces, operate in every entity but in indefinite configurations. The multiple differentiations of the same principles allow for both the subjective (individual) and objective (cosmic) dimension of time, as well as for its diversified conceptualisation and historicity.

If in every finite entity the contradiction between these two principles is actual and active, in the Absolute it is taken as implicit and non-active. The Absolute, the Unconditioned, the Highest – according to Schelling's different terms – is considered as the concept of *expressing* of the infinite potentialities, or, as the latter are clarified in two categories, of the *being* and of the *what-is*:

According to the concept of the unconditioned we have put forward, we must say that is what-is, and yet is being as well. But this proposition itself still requires explanation. To begin with, what

is this It (*Es*) that is both being as well as what-is? Clearly, a twofold examination of it is possible. We can examine it to the extent that is both what-is, as well as being; however, we must examine it to the extent that it is merely It – in other words – simply *that which* is both being and what-is. But as *that which* is both being and what-is, it is necessarily neither the one or the other. For as that which is both, it is the expressing (*das Aussprechende*) of both and can therefore be neither one of them in particular nor both at the same time; it is above both.²⁰

The Absolute stands for the concept which corresponds to a non-restful, dynamic phase, out of which anything could come up, as a result of the potential activity of the polar wills. The latter seem to be indifferent to each other, nevertheless, they are in a state of mutual, unconscious longing and yearning for each other. 'Being is for its part, perfectly indifferent to what-is. But the more this composure is profoundly deep and intrinsically full of bliss, the sooner must a quiet longing produce itself in eternity'.²¹

The notion of the Absolute so far, attempts to depict a dynamic state full of immense implicit forces, similarly to a 'surging, billowing sea',²² 'pregnant with a future'.²³ It is a process of becoming out of the endless productivity and the self-producing of the will. The latter produces itself unconsciously, out of presentiment and inexpressible longing, yet necessarily so. 'We understand eternity to mean the whole: what-eternally-is and being, as well as the (still concealed) expressing of both; as such, eternity is not conscious of itself'.²⁴ It is the process of an unconscious production of the will, which, nevertheless, is able to recognise its products as distinct from it, namely, as essential, as *what-is*. In other words, as *expressed* and *fulfilled* productions, as opposed to the producing will, which is still unexpressed, yearning, longing, striving for its externalisation.

Let us dwell further on this process. We can start from the investigation of the story of any finite entity, for, according to Schelling, to investigate means to retrace the history of the entity under research, as the history of any being leads us to the unfolding of its multiple relations with the cosmos, to the history of the cosmos itself. Therefore, in order to investigate the mysteries of the cosmos, the philosopher could start from any event, or entity, under the condition that he himself

would be predisposed to treat it not as an alien object but as something in which he could discover the thread of his own connections to it as well. Perhaps this is the meaning of the continuous transformations of subject and object in the process of their interaction in the *STI* (1800).

In the above work, this process culminates in the production of the work of art, in which both subject and object are in a dynamic relation of mutual liberation and subordination, fulfilment and exhaustion. The producer (artist, worker . . .) discovers his own self, liberates his internal forces through the struggle with the material, inside and outside of himself. Accordingly, the object both guides the subject and is transformed by it. Nature speaks to man and man speaks to her; the previously mute and dead material now unleashes its latent forces, which man can see and feel only if he wants to, and tries to, through his intimate engagement with the resistance of its material. Man and nature now speak a new language, one mediated through work, desire, struggle and violence.

It is this sort of language, as artist, as violent transgressor of the privacy of the mysteries of the world, that Schelling speaks in the *AW*. He invites us to decode the inner oracle of the order of things and, thereby, of ourselves. The inner oracle, anyway difficult to describe, stands for the 'essence' of things, the *what-is* of things. It is mute and unable to express that which is enclosed within it. It is mute because the 'what-is' of things is not a static permanent substance that underlies things or reveals itself. In fact, it is only in its relation to the other that it actualises itself:

. . . this essence is in itself mute and cannot express what is enclosed within it. Indeed it would never open unless it were escorted by an other, itself in the process of becoming. . . . This (inner oracle), however, feels no less drawn to the other. Buried within it is the memory of all things, their original condition, their becoming, their meaning. But this archetypal image of things slumbers within it – not, indeed as an extinguished and forgotten image, but rather as an image growing with its own essence that it cannot take out of itself and call upon. This image would certainly never awake again, if a presentiment of and longing for knowledge did not lie in that unknowing itself.

But incessantly called by this (other) to its ennoblement, the higher essence notices that the lower is assigned to it, not to be held in idleness, but rather that it might have an instrument in which it could behold itself, express itself, and become intelligible to itself.

For everything lies within it at the same time and without distinctions, as one; but in the other, it can distinguish and separate out what is (distinguishable) in itself.²⁵

Schelling clarifies the above process by means of his new terms of *potencies*. These are rather analytic determinations of what was previously introduced by the less rigid notion of the will, which now divides itself into three potencies. According to this line of thought, every finite thing is characterised by a network of multiple potentialities. This is what Schelling calls the first potency, namely the potency of *being*, and relates to the entity's objective dimension. The entity as such is not an object only for us, but also for itself, in the sense that it has not expressed itself, it has not released its inner latent powers, and is also completely unaware of this. This aspect is called, analytically, *being* or object, but in a completely different way from what the representational classification would name as object. In fact, it is a being full of life, in so far as it is specified as a stage of longing, hunger, desire, presentiment, and thus stands for the dynamic state of an exceptional energetic density. This is why Schelling uses the term 'posits itself', even when he refers to the objective dimension of an entity, or rather even more so, since 'positing' here does not signify the spontaneity of the intellect but cosmic spontaneity. For here, we deal with wills that *posit themselves*, even though unconsciously, as spontaneous springiness of energy, as manifestation of the active and self-generative character of every finite entity in the cosmic becoming.

For considered purely as such, being is selfless and completely immersed in itself. But on precisely this account, being draws its opposite into itself, and is a constant thirst for essence, a yearning to attract what-is, or to attract a subject, so that by means of this subject it might step forth from a state of mere potentiality into activity. But when being is considered as already active (*wirkendes*), as a being that is also again by itself, then it is necessarily already accompanied by a thing – that-is (*ein Seyendes*); and this conflicts with the being, with what is based entirely in itself.²⁶

This longing, 'regarded in itself, (it) is also a will, . . . not a conscious but a prescient will',²⁷ we already find in the *Of Human Freedom* treatise. There, it is called the *will-of-depths*, or the *self-will* of creatures 'by means of which alone all life achieved differentiation and distinctiveness to the last degree'.²⁸ This longing, the potency of *what-is-not*, constitutes the impulse and strength of all life. It is the principle of

individuation that makes the cosmos rich, for the longing for self-expression is the dividing power that gives uniqueness and unity, that creates in-dividuality. It stands for the process of in-dividuation, understood as a process of acquiring uniqueness by means of continuous divisions and differentiations.

But what does differentiation mean and how does it come about? It would appear to consist in an act of sheer spontaneity and inner necessity, an act of a new kind of freedom that raises new, tighter bonds. It is, for example, the experience of a new thought, the discovery of a discrimination that reveals new connections with things, or the spontaneity of the duplication of a cell that thus becomes doubly related to the living tissue. From this point of view, the deeper a process is differentiated, the deeper it is interrelated with the rest of the universe, since the process of division simply discovers the new, yet already there, threads of relations. We are used to ascribing the task of division to reflection. The interesting point about Schelling here is that he claims that longing, the unconscious will for self-expression, is what brings about differentiations in life. For longing is the desire, the hunger – immanent in things – to express their inner potential. This is the condition of things themselves in nature, in man, in the cosmos. 'If the eternal will – that original force of negating – could ever stop working, everything would turn into nothing and it would again be nothing as it once has been'.²⁹

This longing is also-called the inexorable drive of everything to become *master* of its inner essence, and yet an original force of *negating* formation, that is, of resisting the stagnation of any delimited form. Schelling uses the terms desire, hunger, presentiment, longing, possibly in order to make even more explicit his contrast to the mechanistic terminology of his age. These terms also echo the poetic imagination of creation myths of ancient mythologies and the philosophies of Gnostic sects which stand as a remote background to his works.³⁰ Longing recalls Empedocles' Nistis – the insatiable goddess and fundamental *rhizoma* of the cosmos – Aristotle's concept of *dunamis* – the moving principle of things – and anticipates Nietzsche's will-to-power.

Hence, we see that the terminology of forces is transformed into an emotional one. This may sound anthropomorphic. However, this may be precisely Schelling's way in order to stress the immanent connection between man and the cosmos. Moreover, this language intends to encapsulate the dynamic nature of the cosmos in its creative, extroverse and generative dimension, since creation proper is actually the product of e-motion according to the original meaning of the word

emotio, as that which moves one out of something, which makes one move. Emotion is thereby different from feeling or sentiment, which is associated rather with passivity or even stagnation. Schelling's language becomes emotional in this sense: emotions, moods, presentiments become extrovert and creative, working hard to release the potential from its lethargic state.

One would expect Schelling to complete his account of becoming through the above problematic. However, he introduces two other potencies: (a) the potency of *what-is* or subjectivity, the affirming principle that pertains to an entity that posits itself as essence, as that which renders it as having expressed its potential, and (b) the potency of unity, or *spirit*, as the common affirming of both previous potencies. We need to examine the difference between the first and second potencies. If the first potency is mostly the driving will that longs for self-expression, then what is the distinction between it and the second potency? It has been suggested that the second potency consists in the realisation of the lack and the formulation of a goal, a plan posited by the entity.³¹

The above suggestion, though, misses the main point that the *potencies* (as terms) refer to processes, to activities, rather than to static products or fixed and external determinations, such as a specific plan indicates. We suggest that the second potency attempts to account for the process of internal discipline, concentration and determination that is needed in order for an entity to express itself in a formative way. It refers to the process of longing's self-bending, which unfolds its primal density, and sees in its image its internal colourful diversity. However, this self-bending occurs against longing's resistance, in a battle with itself, and from this point of view it is a struggle for its intense, conscious concentration, intense recollection of energy; a type of energy that gives shape and style, form and meaning, light and warmth. This is what mythologically has been depicted by the motif of the original egg, or the golden germ, the appearance of *Phanes*, the shining God, who procreates himself exactly as consciousness enlarges itself, suddenly, after a creative and intense concentration upon itself. Then consciousness becomes transparent, at once diffused and concentrated, like the energy of the light, illuminating and warming, the unifying strength of love. The second potency is the power that strives to give form to the drive of self-expression, not according to a self-imposed duty or external goal, but according to Schelling, out of a new type of substantial religiosity, and

an inner unity of knowledge and action. In the *Of Human Freedom* essay, referring to what he has named will-of-love, he qualifies it as that type of religiosity that is in contrast to 'idle brooding, pietistic intimations, or will-to-feel divinity'.³² He demarcates himself from a concept of love and duty that could be associated with formal moralising:

I admit willingly and gladly to all who wish to assert, that morality is excluded from my system of philosophy in this sense, as a virtue which an individual can acquire for himself.

It is a miserable undertaking to seek to derive God from morality, and not only because so many find the assumption of a God useful as a means toward morality. Such people have a utilitarian viewpoint. God is for them a household remedy which one can use to strengthen himself.³³

Instead he links this concept of will-to-love with a new understanding of religiosity.

We understand religiosity in the original, practical meaning of the world . . . it is the expression of the highest unity of knowledge and action which makes it impossible for one's act to contradict one's will. . . . Even in its origin, religiosity means action being bound, in no wise a choice between opposites as is assumed when the freedom of the will is an equilibrium arbitrit, as it is called, but the highest commitment to the right, without choice.³⁴

The potency of *what-is*, then, seems to relate to the will-to-love that actualises, expresses and fulfils itself by virtue of expressing its inner need. It is the freedom that comes from the highest commitment, since the latter internally coincides with the former.

In this respect, the will-to-love is also the actualisation of the overcoming of one's blind selfishness – the self-will of the first potency – and thus stands for the communion with the whole. It is the experience of self-transparency and awareness of the universal, and thus it is like an inner birth, a gradual and painful or sudden rise of a state of fulfilment and clarity, as if the wholeness of the previous abyss has now been filled with light.

It is the inversion of the previous potency, the transmutation of hatred into love: from ongoing sharp divisions to diffusing unification, from brutality to religiosity, from inexorable *hubris* to mild humility, from lack to fulfilment, from hunger to satiation.

Both potencies are categorical tools that attempt to grasp two polar, illusory states: the first, the illusion of blind individuation, the second, the illusion of transparent universality: the first, the illusion of a disconnected individualist self-will; the second, the illusion of a complete connection with ourselves and the world, in so far as we project – in a Fichtean way – our illuminated consciousness to the world itself and thus assume harmony with it.

The third potency is the unity of the previous ones. Or it is rather the only one process occurring, already there, that we split into its analytical components. As potency, it describes again both the process of producing in its movement and its distinctive moments. As a term though, it is again a new category that fixes this movement afresh. The advantage of this category is that it attempts to grasp the movement in a richer and more contradictory way than the previous ones, which caught only the extremes. This category, therefore, assumes less rigidity; more of a moving image than a mere snapshot. It refers to the whole process of expression, to its paradoxes, culminations and decays, to its different moments and, in particular, to the moment of actualisation. It is both a creative and destructive potency, where creation can be destructive and destruction can be creative.

In particular, Schelling refers in detail to the moment of the attainment of expression, which he calls *spirit* and which stands for the unity of the principles. 'This is the first pure joy of mutual finding and being found'.³⁵

This unity is the moment in which the unexpressed is expressed, actualised, formed, uttered. But its utterance comes more from the sounds of the free play between the interacting forces rather than from the logical articulation of the attained unity that may lead to the domination of one will over the other. Schelling prefers to depict this free unity through the allusive meanings that the image of youth may evoke:

Now this would be the most excellent and perfect unity, since the conflicting elements are free and yet at the same time one, and free movement neither cancels unity nor does unity cancel free movement. Even when this type of unity presents itself on perhaps a lower level, it still deserves to be kept in mind and indeed comprehended. If we want to give something similar, the most fitting comparison would probably be with the unity of forces of which one becomes aware in the innocence of youth. There, all forces are indeed present and in mutual interaction amongst themselves, excited by gentle interplay; but no character, no I-hood, no one has stepped forth to dominate and control them.³⁶

This vibrant and thriving unity is a creation out of love and hatred, out of longing and discipline: as a child of both strife and love, it is fragile. In fact, it is not a final product at all, but just a new configuration in the process of transmutations. It is described as a state of bliss or ceaseless excitement, which exists only because there was a will that longed for it. For only a deep disquieting wave of longing and insatiable desire can give rise to moments of inexhaustible pleasure and pure joy. Deep satisfaction arises only as a response to an equally deep desire. But the deeper the fulfilment, the stronger its disquieting becomes:

But after this force achieves totality and recognises itself in the unity of spirit, this one-sided relation cancels itself again. For the affirming essence eternally calls for the negating will, in order that it might eternally be generated from this will and rise up over it as the essence.³⁷

The unity attained by the moment of actualisation calls again for disruption:

For unity or for spirit, however, the opposition serves as an eternal pleasure [lust], since spirit only becomes sensible to itself in the opposition; and far from sublating this opposition, spirit seeks instead to constantly posit and confirm it.³⁸

For it is a unity of living, creative powers and indeed of their *free interplay*, which implies that each one of the polar forces holds its full vitality and strength. The distinctive feature, then, of the moment of expression, consists in this type of dynamic unity that allows and even strengthens the freedom of the interacting powers that constitutes this unity. It is a moment of unique co-ordination of different forces, the mutual finding of mutually seeking forces, rare and exceptional, and thus, fragile. It is a moment where longing enjoys its free expression, 'rejoices in the soothing of its harshness and severity, in the quieted hunger of its attracting desire'³⁹ This moment of dynamic concord is called *totality*, but it is exactly its fragility and transitoriness that attest to its openness, or rather, its non-closedness in contrast to what the term 'totality' usually implies. Here, Schelling encapsulates the third illusory moment, which is, however, much more dynamic and vanishing, in so far as 'far from sublating the opposition, spirit seeks instead to constantly posit and confirm it'.⁴⁰

But in what does this opposition consist? So far, according to Schelling's own distinctions, we have dealt with the opposition

between *being* and *what-is*, objectivity and subjectivity, potentiality and actuality. But if in the moment of spirit, there is a mutual finding, as Schelling claims, how does the opposition maintain or even develop itself? It is here that the idea of potencies, as wills, as self-generative powers, proves its importance and makes even more explicit the dynamism and resourcefulness of Schelling's thought. Accordingly, it is precisely the event of mutually finding that transforms the polar wills and not only maintains the opposition, but also transforms it into a new one, according to the new qualitative circumstances created thereby. In this way, we could also avoid a crude teleological determination of the notion of opposition and, consequently, of movement itself. In any case, the opposition is much more immanent and internal than that depicted between the two, allegedly completely distinct, wills. Thus far, Schelling uses a pictorial language that externalises and even substantiates the concept of opposition.⁴¹

We suggest that we should think of opposition – and thereby of the source of movement itself – as an internal and generative process within the complex that we analytically distinguish between the *expressible* and the *expressed*. Schelling clearly states:

What-is-not and what-is are not two different essences in it but are rather only one essence regarded from different sides. That by virtue of which it is not, is the very thing by virtue of which it is.

For it is not due to a lack of light and essence that it is not, but rather as a dynamic hiding-away, an active striving backward into the depths, into concealment, and therefore as an active force that likewise *is-* and hence is comprehensible. . . . *But it* [that is, the will] *negates itself only in order to reach essence.*⁴² [my emphasis]

Is this a claim for teleology? To begin with, there is definitely a demand that the expressible must be expressed. This demand is always there – since the will, as a whole, is self-generative – either as hunger and severity, or as silent disquieting and imperceptible stirring. Hence, the opposition moves and is transformed, in an ongoing movement of recurrent moments of despair and bliss, hunger and satiation, evacuation and fulfilment, births and deaths.

No entity to this day can be created without the repeated production of its archetype. Indeed we will hazard the assertion that every act of generation occurring in nature marks a return to a moment of the past, a moment that is allowed for an instant to enter the present time as an alienated (re)appearance.⁴³

It is this type of movement that allows for the creation of archetypal images, as a mode of apprehending the world and its history, especially as a mode of visualising the future and re-experiencing the past. Now we hazard the idea that it is the concept of the *archetype* that can accommodate the notion of *telos* that is implied by the above abstract. The concept of the archetype recalls a long tradition and its deeper understanding would require a separate field of inquiry. At present, we will focus only on the connotations that are derived exclusively from Schelling's text and relevant to our discussion.

Schelling expounds his ideas on archetypes in a scattered way during the last pages of his text, which are indeed the most opaque and challenging part of the book. Schelling mentions that

the doctrine of the archetypes is lost in deepest antiquity; the Greeks already regarded it as a sacred legacy. This certainly fosters the suspicion that the doctrine had lost something of its original meaning by then, since even Plato was only a reporter and interpreter of this ancient teaching.⁴⁴

Schelling's approach to archetypes comes from his more general conceptualisation of the organic nature of time. In fact, the archetype is but a possibility that can be rendered actual exactly by virtue of the organic conceptualisation of time.

The archetype, as condensed psychic and cosmic energy, allows the experience of a spectacular reversal of time, in which the future, in a way, becomes experienced before its advent, as vision, as a momentary fleeting sensation, and the most remote past can be re-enacted and relived through the living experience of an archetypal image, in which 'nothing was enduring, nothing was solid, but everything was in unceasing formation'.⁴⁵

The archetypes are considered as images of future things, as visions of the future or evocation of a distant past, far beyond the limited span of our individual lifetime, as if we receive them from the hand of the cosmic memory:

The production of such archetypes or visions of future things is a necessary moment in the overall development of life, and even if these archetypal images cannot be understood as physical natures in precisely the normal sense, they certainly cannot be thought apart their physicality. They are neither merely universal concepts of the understanding, nor fixed models; for they are Ideas precisely

because they are eternally full of life, in ceaseless motion and production.⁴⁶

But how do they come about? How are they connected with the organic nature of time? In order to approach the above questions we need to connect our previous discussion on time with Schelling's remarks on mesmeric sleep, normal sleep, animal magnetism and oriental mythology, all of them scattered in the last pages of the text.

Schelling mentions that man – as a network of living forces⁴⁷ – 'seems at least partly subject to an outer potency that cancels the free relations of forces within him and transforms the relation into a necessary one'. Further,

Internally, a waking man and a sleeping man are entirely the same. None of the inner forces that are active in the waking state are lost in sleep. From this it is already evident that the difference between these states, as well as their alteration, is not determined from within the organism; rather, it is the effect of a potency external to the organism, now attracting, now releasing. All forces of a man in the waking state are apparently governed by a unity that holds them together, like a common exponent (or expressing), as it were. In sleep, by contrast, each force and each instrument seems to work for itself, and a freely willed sympathy takes the place of an externally determined unity. And while the whole looks as though it were dead and ineffective on the outside, the freest play and inter-communication of forces seems to unfold on the inside.

In the normal course of life, the effect of that outer force of attraction appears as sometimes waning, sometimes disruptive, in regular alternation. When this happens, an unusual suspension of weakening of this force seems possible, according to the familiar phenomena of the so-called animal magnetism.

Indeed, the power seems actually given to one man to transcend that outer potency and return another man to the free inner relations of life, so that he appears dead externally, while internally a steady and free connections of all forces emerges from the lowest up to the highest.⁴⁸

He describes mesmeric sleep and dreams that originate out of the mutual independence of the inner forces as states that are characterised by those 'free inner relations of life', liberated from external unifying potencies. Here 'there is a disruption of forces, a relaxation of all links, and *being is posited-outside-itself*'.⁴⁹

Generation and Death are similar phenomena from this point of view. In generation, the relaxation of all links enables the bursting forth of a new entity, which, in its actualisation, repeats the ever-recurrent act of creation, recalling the archetype of eternal birth; in death, the relaxation of the entity's links enables its sinking back to the eternity of its non-actualised potentialities. Every death then recalls a birth and a future rebirth. They are phenomena which, by virtue of this liberation of forces, encapsulate a moment of eternity, in the sense of encapsulating the infinite possibilities of being. This is the sense in which being is understood as being posited-outside-of-itself, namely, being that recalls and projects its infinite potentialities by virtue of the unprecedented liberation of its inner forces. The latter seem to be able to acquire their full potential, to be tuned to the latent forces of the cosmos. The idea that Schelling seems to be suggesting is that when man liberates himself from a potency that keeps him in control and external unity, and hence becomes *posited outside himself*, his inner forces – wills – operate in a much more free and multidimensional level. In such states man's sensitivity and imagination are expanded in so far as the spectre of his possibilities appears now magnified, promising and terrifying at the same time. Here, longing becomes intensified and the expressible's inexorable drive to be expressed ruthlessly grasps images from the past and future, or plays the blissful game of imagination's free variations. Time then becomes confused, loses its proper order and succession, moves backwards and forwards in this state of infinite joy and infinite terror.

Schelling clearly states that man can achieve higher things when able to posit-himself-outside of himself:

Why do all great doctrines so unanimously call upon man to divide himself from himself, and give him to understand that he would be able to do anything and could effect all things if he only knew to free his higher self from his subordinate self?

It is a hindrance for man to be posited-in-himself; he is capable of higher things only to the extent that he can become *posited-outside-himself* [*außer-sich-gesetzt*], how an even higher, free, inner contact takes place according to the different gradations of spiritual productions, and how the same thing is required everywhere.⁵⁰

Archetypes, accordingly, are the visions of the future or of the past that can come about in the above state of ecstasis. These visions are new

possibilities, new potentialities, that, having been liberated, are caught by the imagination or are tuned with the dormant and imperceptible pulses of inner life, at the moment in which man has become posited-outside-himself. They are produced during 'that inner state of pure contemplation in which [the eternal] perceives, as if in a vision, the miracles of time [and eternity]'.⁵¹ They express the innermost longing of the expressible, 'eternally full of life', 'in ceaseless motion and production', and thereby could constitute a *telos* for man's activity. But this *telos* is not an externally posited model, a duty or social obligation, nor a static end to be achieved. It is a goal that even if attained will be destabilised anew by the new forces generated or annihilated by dint of its expression, which in turn creates new contradictions, new visions.

It would appear that, at least, one critical question remains: how could this ecstasis ever occur? Is it an exclusively personal issue related only to mesmeric sleep and inner withdrawnness? The approach that we can adopt with regard to this issue – related to Heidegger's concepts of authenticity and temporality – critically depends on the interpretation of the meaning of this 'outer potency that cancels the free relation of forces' within man. Schelling offers no further clarification on the matter. However, he definitely attempts to describe a state, a potency which restricts the individual in a field of confined potentialities, acts, roles, thoughts. In this sense, we could associate this potency with the function of a self-controlling force that integrates man within the context of predictability and conceptual rigidity, social conformity and regularity. The state of mesmerism and sleep do not constitute alternative suggestions for the attainment of an ecstatic state. They are only *examples* that could elucidate the concept of visionary moment in a state of relaxation of all links. Schelling, apparently, does not provide us with alternative solutions, nor does he articulate a political philosophy. He wants, at this stage, to emphasise the need for a state that can magnify the spectrum of potentialities and accentuate the need for expressibility according to one's innermost inclinations and desires, as opposed to the adoption of imposed models. For example, in Schelling's beloved ancient ages, it was *Dionysus*, with his shocking Epiphany and even more shattering disappearance that effected the dissolution of all familiarities, social rules and order, thereby provoking states of mass-ecstasis and social mania. This ecstatic moment does not reveal the tragedy of the original finitude of man in his confrontation

with the infinite whole.⁵² Instead, it weds man with infinity precisely by virtue of his finitude in the paradoxical linkage between life and death, in his active immersion in the cosmic enigma, of which man himself partakes.

Dionysus, though, has been expelled from Olympus and ever since then from any social or divine Institution, for the ecstases he instigated were massive and social and not isolated moments of a desperate internal journey for 'authenticity'. Is Schelling's own vision, then, the return of Dionysus?

We are not sure if Schelling wanted Dionysus back, but he certainly suggested that the experiences related to Dionysus were conducive to the expansion of man's personality. However, the experiences of dionysian ecstasis do not constitute the final stage either. They are only moments towards man's expressibility, creativity and actualisation. For the visions one has seen, namely the experience of liberation of his inner forces and its consequent feelings – cheek or contempt for social rules, loss of individual identity, panic and delight for life – are necessary experiences in order for him to come-to-himself, to work according to his potential and give shape and form to it:

We can easily observe that it is not sufficient for a man's complete actuality that he merely be something or implicitly have something. In addition, he needs to become aware of what he is and what he has. He is a thing-that-is, and he has a being by nature without any effort, even as a child. But both this thing-that-he-is and this being [that he has] are ineffective until a force is found that is independent of both, that becomes aware of them both and activates them. It is not enough that forces (or abilities) be present in man; he must recognise them as his own, and only then is it possible for him to grasp on to them and put them to work and into effect . . . this moment, the moment when it becomes aware of what it is, is the moment of awakening, of coming-to-itself in the true sense. . . . This was the highest goal.⁵³

Does this visionary quality pertain to nature as well? Schelling remarks: 'Nature still appears visionary although, in a certain sense, it acts blindly'.

Schelling dismisses both any account of external intelligence that guides and organises Nature's patterns, as well as the blind mechanism explication. How, then, could we understand this dimension of visionary quality along with a certain kind of blind action in nature? Is it a

version of the Kantian claim about purposiveness without purpose? It seems that Schelling again suggests a rather original approach which transcends not only mechanism and teleology, but also the distinction between purposiveness and purpose. We have already seen the latter as far as man's activity is concerned. The main point was based on the idea of the liberation of man's living forces so that the latter could reveal and posit in man as his own purpose, of the expression of his inner potential in its most creative and imaginative dimension.

The visionary quality of nature's activity is also related to a spiritual dimension in nature itself, a spirituality that transpires from the sensual, since 'nature for its part becomes ever more the visible imprint of the highest concepts, [and] it is, in truth, only the ignorant who still looks with scorn upon the physical'.⁵⁴ Nature's elusive spirituality is connected with every entity's inexorable drive to become master of its inner essence. It refers to the power that alchemists sought, namely, to 'what makes gold into gold'⁵⁵ and to that 'something else in and around corporeal things [that] grants them the full sparkle and shine of life'.⁵⁶ It is the indefinable power that holds the magnetic poles together, that makes gold shine, that replenishes the green in plants, that emanates as grace in the highest transfiguration of human corporeality.⁵⁷ It is a force that holds opposites together as opposites, that gives life and individuality to the different entities.

We need to dwell on the question as to what the paradoxical activity of nature – blind and visionary – consists in. The 'blind' dimension is connected to the power of longing as discussed above: the uncontrollable drive of self-expansion that spreads, diffuses itself, dashes against and collides with infinite other forces. However, there is a returning force which is *not* the outcome of the blind collisions, or a reactionary force to the expansive one, but immanent in matter itself and only analytically distinguished from the supposedly pure expansive force. This dual character of matter in its infinite divisibility allows for the multiplicity and richness of forms in nature, in life. It seems that the visual dimension in nature is precisely this 'ability' to maintain unities of tensions and thereby to restore dynamic balances of forces that constitute the different determinate individualities at different moments.

The above approach accords with Schelling's anti-dualism, that is, that the structures we perceive in nature are a dynamic and *finite* intersection of our forces (cognitive, perceptive, emotional) and nature's forces, and not just a subjective and completely arbitrary classification of chaos according to our convenience. Or, to put it another way, even our convenience is conditioned by our immersion in the cosmic forces that we

call chaos. Order and chaos represent two categories, but also two archetypes in so far as both have been experienced in man's history. In this sense, the assumption of nature's purposiveness is rendered meaningless, since this concept presupposes the fundamental separation of man from nature, according to which nature is assumed to organise itself in patterns comprehensible by man's intellect. Nature's visionary dimension can be interpreted as nature's self-seeing tendency – nature's imagination – the latter understood as its formative power. Hence, nature's visionary aspect seems to coincide with its tendency for self-differentiation, and it is here again where *telos* and spontaneity, necessity and freedom meet and where mechanism and teleology are suspended. Does this augur the most perfect possible world as the coincidence of necessity and freedom, as the compulsive suggestion of the 'inner necessity of the agent' in the *Of Human Freedom* essay implies?

It is at this point that we need to recover the deeper meaning of the concept of *indifference*. Our suggestion is that indifference, *contra* its various misinterpretations, is the concept, in Schelling, that attempts to encapsulate the *possibility of contingency*. However, contingency should not be understood in Kantian terms, namely, as the realm of appearances that falls beyond the laws of the understanding, nor in mechanistic terms, which assume the movement of matter by dint of external causes. Nor does it relate to the Aristotelian *automaton*, which acts as an external cause, *contra* to the *physis* of things. Instead, contingency *inheres* in the above-discussed paradoxical process of self-expression. The following concluding remarks may illuminate this critical issue.

In our previous discussion of the Absolute, we reached a point where the state of Indifference had been conceived as the dynamic, non-restful state of latent operative wills, of infinite possibilities. 'According to the concept of the unconditioned we have put forward, we must say that it is *what-is* and yet it is *being* as well. But this proposition itself still requires explanation. To begin with. . . . It is above both.'⁵⁸ Attention must now be focused on this 'above', or the 'before', as Schelling also calls it. Here, Schelling attempts to grasp an even more elusive possibility than the multiple potentialities of the expressing; namely, the possibility of a complete non-expressibility:

The unconditioned can express itself as *what-is* and as *being*, and it can refrain from expressing itself as both. In other words, it can be both,

or it can let both alone. Free will is just this ability to be something along with the ability to not-be-it.⁵⁹

Here we encounter the possibility of the absorption of time, a moment of eternity, a moment before the self-positing of any possibility, mute and lost. At the same time, it is an instance of explosion, of bursting out, of expression; a transmutation, a moment of contingency. Indifference, then, means the absence of any determinate relation, a *lack of commitment to any relation*, and is thus contingency, surprise. Indifference can be seen as the 'mood' of transmutation and the inversion of teleology: in the former (i.e. contingency), time sinks in a moment, while in the latter (teleology) time unfolds according to its *telos*. It is as if time stops at the moment of the attainment of expression, as it also stops before the discovery of any potentiality. It halts in a moment of free will, of sheer contingency, where every determination seems to be inadequate. Indifference is the moment of sheer surprise and ineffable shock where 'all plausible connections collapse'. Hegel would possibly riposte that this is already a determination, but this is so only after the understanding has managed to recover and reorganise its unity through the recollection of its shock. To be sure, the shock does not occur in an absolute void. However, the determinations of the shock can be found – partially – only after its occurrence, when, by its very happening, it illuminates its conditions. The contingent can become determinate only when, by means of its advent, it betrays its tracks, thereby indicating that our understanding was blind, or unprepared. The moment of contingency inheres in every being, as an uncontrollable, unclassifiable dimension and also as its possible and interesting unpredictability. This is why the abyss is always present, as the discrete or violent compulsion for the continuous liquidation of our intellectual and intuitive categories.

This moment is defined as free, pure, unmitigated will. It lacks any predicates because it stands indifferent to any specific expression, since it is free to express or not express any potentiality, and as such is also called the will that wills nothing. From this point of view, the lack of predicates indicates not its nugatory status, but the sheer unpredictability of its activity. This is precisely the meaning ascribed to the concept of the Absolute by Schelling, namely the dimension of free expression in any direction, the moment of contingency lurking in every finite entity in the enigmatic movement of cosmic becoming. The Absolute is not a hypostatised higher Being, nor an ultimate *telos* in the movement of things, but the will that 'always penetrates the greatest turmoils of life and the most violent movement of all forces'.⁶⁰

In this way Schelling brings eternity back to time, the sacred to the profane. This can be further seen through a brief recapitulation of his notion of time in the *AW* and in the *Bruno* essay. In the *AW*, time is the conflict of two oppositional principles and is thereby the mediation between the expressible and the expressed. Accordingly, when the expressible is suddenly expressed (as in a moment of magic, or transmutation), or remains buried in muteness, we have the concept of eternity. Similar ideas are expressed in the *Bruno* essay. 'Things in the universe are more or less perfect, the more or less they embody time. But all the things of the pre-eminent sort incorporate time'.⁶¹ Time here is conceived in terms of self-limitation, as the process of establishing one's particularity. Time is an act which, as *self-limitation*, differentiates the specific entity from the rest of the universe and creates the conditions of succession and intensity, quality and difference. Time as an act of self-limitation pertains to every entity: the more a finite being returns to itself, the more it establishes its own time, its own rhythm and style, and from this point of view, the process of self-limitation is parallel to that of self-expression, both of them manifestation and creation of time.

Every culture, therefore, considered as a particular finitude in the history of the cosmos, creates its own conception of time, and vice versa: from the different conceptions of time we can infer certain typical features of different cultural and historical epochs. The conceptualisation of time in the *AW* elucidates the remarks extant in *Bruno*, concerning the strange phenomena of the *inner sense of time* which some entities surprisingly possess (as migratory birds),⁶² in so far as time is conceived in terms of conflictual forces operative in every entity and in the cosmos. Accordingly man, as the finite entity that aspires to self-expression *par excellence*, establishes his own time, which is conceived as 'the expression of self-consciousness'.⁶³

Time, then, is the manifestation both of finitude and infinitude. It is the outcome of limitation, for otherwise the expressible would be already expressed, the infinite possibilities would be infinitely accessible or actualised and succession or differentiation would be redundant, since everything would be perceived immediately and simultaneously. The *a priori* character of time is the already given fact of our finitude (and of any other entity's finitude in so far as it becomes aware of time). But time is also the outcome of non-limitation in so far as it is an *act* of self-limitation, attesting to the *actualisation* of potentiality, to the establishing of one's identity. It is in this context that we locate the concept of the *Fall*. *Fall*, for Schelling, is precisely the act of

self-limitation, the act of time and self-expression, and it seems that the more one 'falls', the freer one becomes.

The above conceptualisation of time, as indicating both finitude and infinitude, implies Schelling's account of eternity. Eternity inheres in the *history* of the cosmos, now obscure and mute, now shiny and uttered, but always present and recurring. 'For since time commences absolutely in each living thing, and since at the beginning of each time is connected to eternity anew, then an eternity must immediately precede each life'.⁶⁴

In the *AW* we encounter the unexpected breakthrough of the absolute in the history of cosmos and simultaneously the violation of its sacred precincts by the re-enchanted profane. The world appears as both transparent and opaque as never before. The aporias of Reason can no longer be settled in its Architectonic structure. For the ages of the world have no Architectonic. Instead, they transpose us to 'the greatest turmoils of life' and the 'most violent movement of all forces'. It is in this field that now logic and human subjectivity have to readdress their aporias and reconsider their own movement.

6

Schelling's Conception of the Self

In the previous chapters we examined Schelling's differing approaches as regards the notions of the Absolute and finitude. In this chapter we will discuss the implications of these accounts for his conception of the self, in particular with regard to the notions of reflection and freedom. These issues will be explored, respectively, through his early work the *STI* (1800) and the *AW* (1811).

Schelling provided his conception of the self in his major work, the *STI*, which was written just a year before he formulated the first articulation of the System of Identity and as such it mostly moves within the 'spirit' of this philosophical phase, although the interesting elements of Schelling's later thought are already there. These, however, do not unfold their potential since they are confined by the requirements of the Identity principle. Hence, we will be less engaged with the *STI*, in order to explore a conception of the self as the latter can be drawn from the *AW*, which radicalises the break with the Identity System that started from the *Freedom* treatise. So, after a brief discussion of the *STI*, we will endeavour to reconstruct Schelling's possible account of the self according to the ideas expounded in the *AW*.

Schelling's *STI* originates in the Kantian problematic, as far as the possibility of objective cognitive judgements is concerned. As a whole, the work attempts to provide philosophy with the principle that can raise the main dualisms between reason and sensuality, nature and freedom and would constitute the Supreme Principle of Knowledge.

How both the objective world accommodates to presentations in us, and presentations in us to the objective world, is unintelligible

unless between the two worlds, the ideal and the real, there exists a pre-determined harmony. But this latter is itself unthinkable unless the activity, whereby the objective world is produced, is at bottom identical with that which expresses itself in volition, and vice versa.

Now it is certainly a productive activity that finds expression in willing.
[my emphasis]¹

It seems that, according to Schelling, the predetermined harmony is not postulated by the positing of human reason but comes about through the identity of the activity that pertains to both cognitive representations and nature. This statement constitutes the strength but also the weakness of Schelling's thought at this stage, in so far as the interesting idea of productivity is rendered to the status of a transcendental and absolute principle for the totality of all possible experience. Schelling states the above principle in Fichtean terms, that is, as the identical act of self-consciousness, which consists in the absolute freedom of the self-positing of the subject-object Identity, called Intellectual Intuition or Original Self-Consciousness. The latter, however, does not refer to the individual ego but to a universal, all-inclusive totality, which posits – in its identical and absolute act – the infinity of the cosmos, Spinoza's *natura naturans* as subject-object at once, or what Schelling called in his Identity System, Absolute or Reason.

The eternal, timeless act of self-consciousness which we call self, is that which gives all things existence, and so itself needs no other being to support it; bearing and supporting itself, rather, it appears objectively as eternal becoming, and subjectively as a producing without limit.²

We will not pursue in detail the examination of the relation between this principle and its development in the Identity System, but we will only focus on the issues relevant to the topic of this chapter. From this point of view, an interesting difference to be remarked is that the act of Absolute or original self-consciousness in the *STI* is not conceived as an immediate act of primordial identity but as an infinite becoming condensed in an Absolute synthesis of the primordial conflict between opposing activities. Self-consciousness results as the outcome of two infinite, mutually contrasted activities; one expansive, which is a pure producing out towards infinity and is called *real*, and a second contractive, which infinitely *limits* the first activity by turning its products into objects of its intuition and is called *ideal*. The reverting, intuitant

activity is conceived as an act of absolute freedom, which, in its continuous limitations of the producing activity, builds the infinity of limitations and differentiations in the whole of reality.

Both activities, the real and the ideal, mutually presuppose each other. The real, originally striving into infinity, but to be limited for the sake of self-consciousness, is nothing without the ideal, for which in its limitation, it is infinite. Conversely, the ideal activity is nothing without the to-be-intuited, the limitable, and on that very account, the real.³

... It can already be concluded from the foregoing that the identity expressed in self-consciousness is not an original identity but a created and mediated one. What is original is the conflict of opposing directions in the self; the identity is the resultant of this.⁴

For Schelling, the original conflict must be resolved by an Absolute identical synthesis and this is the point where the dynamism of the insight into the conflictual productivity reaches its limits. This will be seen later, as far the implications of his conception of individual self-consciousness and its freedom are concerned.

By means of the infinite condensing of the original act of the Absolute self-consciousness, Schelling states – in a Spinozian line of thought – the immanent necessity of the infinite configurations of the cosmos, as a result of the very nature of the Absolute itself, which through its unconditionally free act, infinitely limits itself, self-objectifies itself. Intellectual Intuition is precisely this simultaneous act of necessity and freedom, in which self-consciousness intuits its own products. Intellectual intuition therefore, stands for a free, self-reverting productivity, by means of which self-consciousness attains full transparency of its own productivity.

The action that is cause of all limitation, and can no longer be explained by any other, must be absolutely free. But absolute freedom is identical with absolute necessity. If we could imagine an action in God, for example, it would have to be absolutely free, but this absolute freedom would simultaneously be absolute necessity, since in God we can think of no law or action that does not spring from the inner necessity of His nature. Such an act is the original act of self-consciousness; absolutely free, since it is determined by nothing outside the self; absolutely necessary, since it proceeds from the inner necessity of the nature of the self.⁵

Through this idea Schelling introduces multiplicity and internal differentiation or limitation in the Absolute but does not annul the totality of the Absolute. It is in the *Of Human Freedom* essay, where he dismisses the notion of an all-perfect and all-powerful, supreme Being, that multiplicity – still duality in *Of Human Freedom* – is not appropriated by an encompassing act, as that of Intellectual Intuition, but acquires its independent dimension. Here, finitude is not just a manifestation of the Absolute but a manifestation of this dynamic multiplicity. This is probably the reason why Schelling transforms, from the *Freedom* essay onwards, the terminology of forces to that of wills and potencies. However, Intellectual Intuition is conceived in terms of productivity and indeed between conflictual forces, and it is this aspect that allows Schelling's original approach to the notion of the self. In fact, Schelling, in the *STI*, elaborates the most fruitful dimension of Fichte's thought, that is, the self as productivity, which, as we saw in Chapter 3, for Fichte remained undeveloped in favour of his deductive enterprise.⁶

Since the productivity of the original self-consciousness includes the infinity of all manifestations of reality it can be understood as a *generative* concept, out of which the notion of the self can also be generated. The understanding of the self's production as part of this original act is the difficult task of the philosopher. However, the latter can never fully grasp the infinity of actions contained in the absolute act. He can only grasp some distinctive actions which constitute 'epochs' in the 'history of self-consciousness'. From this point of view, Schelling already from the beginning of his work presents the *STI* as the demonstration of the *fundamental impossibility* of the self's attainment of its complete self-transparency or comprehension of the cosmos and thus of the impossibility of intellectual intuition itself.

Since, therefore, there is an infinite conflict in self-consciousness, the one absolute act we start from contains – united and condensed – an infinity of actions whose total enumeration forms the content of an infinite task; (if it were ever to be completely accomplished, the whole structure of the objective world, and every determination of nature down to the infinitely small, would have to be revealed to us.) So, philosophy can enumerate only those actions which constitute epochs, as it were, in the history of self-consciousness, and establish them in their relations with one another.⁷

If, however, intellectual intuition cannot occur as an all-inclusive comprehension of the infinity of the actions of the Absolute, nonetheless,

it can irrupt as a *moment* in the self, since the latter is part of the Absolute and partakes of its forces. This is the moment when the self by its own spontaneity attempts to come to itself and thereby *imitates*, momentarily, the original act precisely because it is part of it. In this sense, intellectual intuition constitutes the mainspring of the self's perennial productivity as its infinite, creative dimension. 'Hence it is that at every moment I can come to be for myself, exactly as I come originally to be for myself.'⁸ However, during the exposition of the different 'epochs' of the self's productivity the term that accounts for the various phases of the productive process is not intellectual intuition, but *productive* intuition. We need to dwell for a while on this interesting distinction, which attests to Schelling's subtle account of the relation between the finitude of the self and yet, of its immanent ability to attain the Absolute. The self is conceived in the similarly oppositional terms as that of the original act of self-consciousness, namely, in terms of the real and ideal activity. Productive intuition attempts to describe the unifying aspect of the double-natured activity in the case that the latter pertains to a finite self-consciousness. Productive intuition, as opposed to intellectual intuition which is the immediate transparency of one's own products and therefore would only apply to an absolutely self-born being, attempts to describe the various stages in the process of the constitution of the self by its own activity. The self both expands and reverts upon itself and the world, thereby creating a developing field of fusion between itself and the world. Here, the boundaries between world and self dissolve and the roles of subject and object interchange and alternate: 'I posit a region of consciousness where this separation does not exist and where inner and outer worlds are conceived as interfused.'⁹

As such, productive intuition attempts to account for both the self's infinite dimension in its self-producing activity, and its finitude, so long as the self finds itself limited by external forces. The interaction between these forces creates the field of interfusion between the self and the world. The different 'epochs' of the self, in turn, are defined according to the relation of the self with this field. At this point it is worth noting that although Schelling introduces the concept of productive intuition in the end of the first epoch, that is sensation, as the rise of intelligence, the term in fact applies to the whole productive process whose various configurations constitute the different modes of the self's constitution. Productive intuition is the ever-transforming process of both producing and self-intuiting that pertains to the self's productivity and characterises the self throughout. The notion of

productive intuition stands for the *spontaneity* of the self's ongoing productivity. Spontaneity is primordially associated with *intuition* and *feeling*, which generically creates the specific spontaneity of reflection, as an act of abstraction from the field of fusion. As far as the relation between productive intuition and intellectual intuition is concerned, we suggest that we interpret productive intuition as *intellectual intuition in its imitation* by the philosopher or any finite subject that attempts to re-enact the original act of absolute freedom. This means the attempt of the re-enactment of any supposed act of absolute freedom by any finite being, such as the human subject, will inevitably take the form of a finite act, which, however, as productive and spontaneously regenerated, has an infinite dimension. Schelling does not explicitly discuss this issue. He definitely points, though, to the partial or momentary character of the imitation of the original act, indicating thereby the finite character of human subjectivity. This is more evident in Schelling's discussion on the various epochs of the self that emerge precisely as different phases of the process of productive intuition.

The various forms of the self's relatedness with the world and itself – which in Kant are conceived as faculties of the subject and in Fichte as being posited by the ego – are now presented as different modes or moments in the self's process of self-constitution, emerging as dynamic balances from the continuous conflict among the oppositional forces operating inside and outside the self. Accordingly, Sensation is a phase of the self's constitution in which the self, at this stage, feels affected and it is unaware of its own activity. Here, the self intuits the field of fusion as entirely objective or external, excluding its own activity. Sensation only arises when the self does not intuit its own productivity and considers itself to be entirely passive. The latter is, according to Schelling, the empiricist dead-end approach – which even Kant did not avoid – because it fails to account for the self's ability to be affected at all. Schelling suggests that sensibility is also an active process, except that the self remains unaware of it. In this point, Schelling introduces his interesting concept of *productive intuition*, which stands for the generative potency of the self uniting both forces. In the stage of sensation though, the self is not aware of this fusion. The conflict between inner and outer forces is conceived as *static*: 'Since it is the outcome of opposing infinite activities, it will necessarily be finite. It is not the conflict of these activities conceived of as in motion; it is a static conflict.'¹⁰ This is

the case in which the self isolates itself from its internal forces and its activity and in turn, conceives it as reified and alien to it. The polarisation between the self and the object gives rise to the emergence of the stage of Reflection, in which productive intuition takes on the form of a Fichtean appropriation of the 'common region of interfusion' back to the self, which is no longer simply self but seems to elevate itself to the level of self-consciousness. Reflection, for Schelling, arises when the self feels strongly restricted by external forces or by forces that it itself renders thus restraining. The self, being absorbed by its fixation to an object which cannot be recalled from its own activity, feels 'trapped in a present'.¹¹

The state of the self at the present juncture is thus briefly as follows. It feels itself driven back to a stage of consciousness to which it cannot, in fact, return. The common boundary of the self and the object, the ground of the second limitation, forms the boundary between the present stage and the past one. The feeling of being thus driven back to a stage that it cannot in reality return to is the feeling of the present. Thus at the first stage of its consciousness the self already finds itself trapped in a present. For it cannot oppose the object to itself without feeling itself restricted and committed, as it were, to a single point. This feeling is no other than that which we describe as self-awareness. All consciousness begins with it, and by it the self first posits itself over against the object.¹²

The self, experiencing the object as a constraining and threatening force, reacts through a radical release of its internal forces that seek to liberate it from the restraining trap and the enslaving present. Reflection then, springs forth as the outcome of an unbearably constraining experience, against which the self discovers its inner liberating forces. Reflection is another product of the conflictual interaction of forces, where the conflict becomes even more static and polarised. However, reflection is still a configuration of productive intuition. From this point of view, judgement power itself is a form of the self's productivity and its determinations are possible by virtue of the interaction between the common forces pertaining to the world and the self, no matter how polarised they are at this stage. Such a polarisation may be the reason for Schelling's characterisation of the concepts as mere shadows of reality. Yet these shadows are 'real' by dint of the common productivity that pertains both to reality and to the human ability to represent its shadows, and it acts as an internal, primordial force springing from within the self and nature.

The necessity of productive intuition, here systematically deduced from the entire system of the self, has got to be derived, as a general condition of knowing as such, directly from the concept thereof; for if all knowing borrows its reality from an immediate cognition, it is this alone that is to be met in intuition; whereas concepts, in fact, are merely shadows of reality, projected through a reproductive power, the understanding, which itself presupposes a higher power, having no original outside itself, and which produces from within itself by a primordial force.¹³

Will and self-determination, in turn, are moments of further polarisation of the above conflict. Reflection, will and self-determination are conceived as static configurations of productive intuition, where the self experiences its self-reverting productivity in an exceptionally exalted way, neglecting or suppressing the products of its own expansive, uncontrollable activity. Accordingly, these moments are conceived as states of illusory freedom, since they exclude a substantial part of the self's activity and move in the field of the hyperactivity of the ideal, self-intuiting tendency. However, the real productivity, whose unconscious products constitute the so-called first epoch of the system, always follows the self, even though the latter thinks that it is liberated from it.

In the *STI*, Schelling classifies the products of the first epoch under the general term of *nature*, so long as the self treats them as alien to it. As such, they fall into the area of the *unconscious* (*Bewusstlos*), a term that for the first time was coined by Schelling for philosophical literature. Nature and the unconscious appear, at this stage, as identical concepts, still assuming an alien and external status with regard to the self, which remains unaware of its immanent relation to them.

The *STI* is usually read in a developmental way, according to which every epoch is superseded in a progressive manner. However, the first epoch is never overcome but rather always accompanies the self in the following epochs as its unknown other, which is precisely the status that Schelling ascribes to Reflection and Pure Will, namely that of indifference, suppression or manipulation of the 'other' inside and outside the self. However, does reflection, for Schelling, coincide with self-consciousness, namely, does the process of thinking presuppose awareness of one's being thinking? We saw that for Kant, the transcendental unity of apperception proved to be the necessary condition of

any coherent cognitive experience and that for Fichte, the self-positing ego constitutes the condition of any experience at all. Accordingly, the concept of the self was defined exclusively in terms of self-consciousness, and indeed, the latter in terms of constant identicalness, or in terms of self-control and autonomy of will. Schelling follows a different path. The self is conceived as a dual activity of antithetical forces and it is precisely the recognition of this immanent dualism that allows the possibility of a non-dichotomous separation or possessive identification between the self and its other. Thinking arises as a moment of this dual operation, as a specific mode of productive intuition, and therefore does not necessarily coincide with the awareness of the self's identity or with reflection in the sense the term had during the seventeenth-century philosophical debate. If this is so, then, who is the agent of thinking? It is Schelling's notion of *personality*, which is not exhausted by the concept of subject and yet is considered as active, that allows a fruitful engagement with the above question. This notion presupposes a different approach to the concept of the unconscious than that which we have so far come across in the *STI*, that is, an understanding that enriches its function beyond the level of the natural and concomitantly reconsiders the concept of nature itself.

In the *STI* the unconscious seems to be restricted to the function of drives, impulses, instincts, that is, to the role of an 'other' that works in opposition to the self's will and determination. Here, Schelling, despite his original conception of the unconscious, develops his conception of personality from the standpoint of a clear-cut separation between conscious and unconscious activities. The self is conceived as entirely absorbed by the unconscious, during the first epoch, while being entirely cut off from it in the second and third one, that is, as reflection and will, until eventually the two activities find each other in the last epoch of artistic productivity.

The intuition we have postulated is to bring together that which exists in separation in the appearance of freedom and in the intuition of the natural product; namely the *identity of the conscious and the unconscious* in the self, and this *the consciousness of this identity*. The product of this intuition will therefore merge on the one side upon the product of nature, and on the other upon the product of freedom, and must unite in itself the characteristics of both [my emphasis].¹⁴

By means of this idea, Schelling introduces the core element of his new conceptualisation of the notion of personality, namely, in terms of the conscious unification of unconscious and conscious activity pertaining to the self. Accordingly, freedom now is conceived as being attainable only through the self's conscious determination to welcome its 'other' and express *creatively* its desires, through the labour and discipline required by the work of art. Schelling will retain this insight in his later works but, as we shall see, he develops it in a dynamic way, leaving aside the simplified dichotomies or identities of this stage. For, as we saw, in the *STI* Schelling keeps completely separate the unconscious and conscious aspect of the self until he discovers their absolute identity in the sphere of artistic creativity. In this way, Schelling assigns to the unconscious, almost exclusively, a natural and alien quality, while he deprives reflection of any creative dimension, rendering it barren and sterile. Accordingly, he ascribes to art an ideal, redemptive role, restricting artistic productivity – whose character is more paradoxical than merely liberating – to the sphere of aesthetic production. Aesthetic production appears as the ultimate stage of productive intuition, in which the complete identity between the self and nature is attained. In this way, movement seems to halt in the work of art and aesthetic production is exalted as an act of absolute freedom. This position derives from Schelling's initial standpoint of the necessity and indeed the pre-existence of an absolute synthesis, which in the act of limitation manifests itself in the form of the work of art.

The intelligence will therefore end with a complete recognition of the identity expressed in the product as an identity whose principle lies in the intelligence itself; it will end, that is, in a complete intuiting of itself; . . . The intelligence will feel itself astonished and blessed by this union, will regard it, that is in the light of a bounty freely granted by a higher nature, by whose aid the impossible has made possible.

This unknown, however, whereby the objective and the conscious activities are here brought into unexpected harmony, is none other than that absolute which contains the common ground of the pre-established harmony between the conscious and the unconscious.¹⁵

The unconscious, or the unknown, eventually is trapped by the work of art that seems to reveal the mysteries of nature. Is this product, however, thus transparent? According to Schelling, the attainment of the Absolute does not refer to a logical transparency but rather to the

emotional state in which the self has a feeling of infinite harmony with itself and the world and thereby it attains the deep emotion of absolute freedom.

In this way, the principle of Identity radically restricts the dynamism of the process of the self's constitution, which completes its movement in the alleged attainment of absolute freedom of the work of art and the perfect harmony with nature. However, it seems that the strengths of aesthetic productivity, though this would require a different research, lie more in its dynamics to reveal and sharpen the producer's contradictions and the paradoxes of the word, rather than in resolving them.

Moreover, if in the last epoch Schelling discovers the absolute identity between conscious and unconscious activities in the previous epochs, these are conceived in a dichotomous mode. Hence, Schelling, in this work as a whole, seems to be describing the process of individuation of the modern self – through the suppression of the unconscious and the celebration of pure logic, or the inversion of this through the deification of pure art – the consolidation of disciplinary specialisation and the dissociation of science from art, morality from pleasure, work from love. However, despite the partial validity of this approach, we still find that great scientific conceptions have been nurtured by inspired and visionary messages from the unconscious, or that great works of art have been the product of long-lasting and arduous expression of the 'logic of the longing', attesting to the inevitable interaction between conscious and unconscious activities, despite the demands of methodical and predictable organisation of the self's actions as a whole.

We need then to turn our attention to the *Of Human Freedom* treatise and the *AW* from which we can draw the more dynamic and flexible approach of Schelling's conception of personality and freedom. In these works, as we saw earlier, Schelling is freed from the necessity of the absolute synthesis of the conflictual activities that permeate the cosmic becoming. In the *AW* he shifts the emphasis to the exploration of the paradoxical movement of finite entities. He conceives every entity as a nexus of interacting potencies that strive, in their different way, to express the entity's inner potential. We may now focus on the particular aspects of this process that allow us to draw the dynamic insights of Schelling's conceptualisation of personality, mainly through his reconsideration of the relation between the unconscious

and the conscious, though now the latter terms do not refer to man's inner forces but to the potencies of the cosmos. Hence, the following account of the notion of the self is not as such articulated by Schelling, but consists in a possible reconstruction, according to the reading of the text in the previous chapter.

The forces pertaining to the self are now conceived in terms of wills or potencies, pointing thus to their relatively autonomous dimension. The first potency, the so-called *being* that stands for unconscious productivity, lies in active interaction with the second one, the so-called *what-is*, that stands for the self-reverting, self-recollecting, conscious activity. The contradictory and antagonising operation of these wills, as we saw, results in the various creative stages of expression, but also in the recurrent disquieting of the moments of fulfilment which never assumes a final or absolute status. This process, which also defines the constitution of one's personality, consists in a becoming of findings and losses, bliss and despair, satisfaction and anxiety, possessing and dispossessing.

We need to look closer at the above process, especially with regard to Schelling's concept of indifference. The latter provides insight into the dimension of autonomy, of the self-moving, uncontrollable and unpredictable character of each will, which accordingly allows a relation not only of mutual dependence but also of *autonomy* between the unconscious and the conscious activities, and yet the latter apprehended in a non-dualistic way. A dualistic account of this conflict, as we saw, results either in a separation of the self from its products – in the stages of sensation, reflection and will – or in a complete identification with them in the aesthetic production. In contrast, we will try to develop an account of the conflictual interaction between the conscious and unconscious that would allow both the self's surrender and distance from its productions, and more importantly, the acknowledgement of the anisotropic and asymmetrical character of these activities. These may feed each other, but do not assume a supplementary role in the perspective of the attainment of a complete harmony between themselves and thereby in the self and in its relation to the world.

In the context of this new approach, the products of the unconscious are not simply reduced to the natural level, that is, instincts, drives and

impulses, which, even in their conscious and creative transformation by means of artistic activity, still assume a restrictive understanding of the role of the unconscious. The latter leads, as we have seen in the *STI*, to the new illusion of the attainment of absolute freedom by means of the alleged complete identity between the conscious and unconscious in the realm of artistic productivity, absolutising thus the role of art, substituting the moral law with an equivalent aesthetic norm and reintroducing the delusion of appropriating the 'other', albeit now in the form of its projection onto a 'third', namely the work of art. The approach adopted in the *STI*, then, does not lead us far beyond a Fichtean aestheticism. However, the unconscious, despite the constant efforts of the conscious, will always remain unconscious, that is, unknown, enigmatic and unconquerable, an 'irreducible remainder' in any form of expression.

Yet this unknown would prove to be our best, our most loyal friend; for it will always remain free, our constant nourishing 'mother' and at the same time our most challenging, mocking and cruel adversary. It will unsolicitedly intrude into our fixed conceptions, it might attack with intolerable and incredible fantasies and dreams but it will also feed us with beautiful, liberating and pleasurable images and emotions. It may connect us with the immemorial past of the prehistory of the cosmos, it may bring us the voices of our forgotten ancestors, or it may reveal to us scenes of the future, moments of our undiscoverable potential life. It may disclose the most forbidden and shameful aspects of our self-constructed persona, but it may also reveal hidden beauties and gifts dwelling in our inscrutable self. Schelling explicitly states the relative autonomy of the two wills inside us.

The conflicting wills are certainly not bound to each other. If in the expressible, the relation between the opposites is characterised by an inner necessity compelling them to be one (because both are equally necessary to the whole) then, in the expressing, the relation between the forces is characterised by an inner freedom not to be one, but rather for each to be for itself. Each of the wills is individual and self-sufficient, and each has the complete freedom to posit itself and to negate the other. But precisely because they are equally unconditioned, *neither will can negate the other without being negated by it in turn*; and similarly the other way around: *neither can posit itself without positing the other*.¹⁶ [my emphasis]

Accordingly, the ego does not have the identity of itself before its eyes. What rather accompanies all our representations is our unconscious

aspect. The two wills, acting and constituting the self, lie in a relation of both dependence and autonomy. Conscious activity attempts to give meaning, unity and order to its various perceptive, mental or emotional messages. The unconscious, for its part, has its own life, since it does not only consist of forgotten, repressed or marginalised conscious contents. Instead, its life manifests an extraordinary richness and complexity which rarely reaches the threshold of consciousness – as the inexplicability of unexpected moods and unplanned desires attests to – in which case it rather takes on the form of a riddle, of an oracle.

Everything that is something without being it must by nature seek itself; but this is not to say that it will find itself, and still less that a movement or going out from itself takes place. This is a seeking that remains silent and completely unconscious, in which the essence remains alone within itself, and is all the more profound, deep, and unconscious, the greater the fullness it contains in itself.¹⁷

The unconscious operates in a much more disorderly and erratic way than does consciousness, and though it rarely reaches the conscious, it in-forms it – as the ‘deformative form indwelling within all form’¹⁸ – providing conscious concepts with dimensions and rhythms that enrich or subvert their assumed fixed meaning. But ‘neither will can negate the other without being negated by it in turn’.¹⁹ In other words, neither the unconscious nor the conscious can acquire full domination over one’s personality. For, if the conscious dismisses, neglects, suppresses and tries to dominate the unconscious, this, in turn, will negate it. It will return, shattering one’s superficial identity, ridiculing and disclosing the empty and delusory freedom proclaimed by it. In this case, consciousness may seek shelter to the further consolidation of this identity through the vain pursuit of social status, power, and the fearful locking-up of its ‘threatening’ other. Accordingly, consciousness cannot entirely surrender to the unconscious. For in this way, individuality and uniqueness are not necessarily enriched but may also well be dissolved into an undifferentiated permanent state, which, so long as the self is unable to detach itself from it and realise its uniqueness, can take the form of an external collective consciousness, such as blind commitment to religious or political doctrines or uncritical conformity to social and cultural patterns and fashionable ‘ideologies’.

The process of personality and individuation seems to follow the difficult and challenging path of the interactive struggle between the conscious and the unconscious. Consciousness should allow its loss in

the unknown depths of the self. In this unexplored area it may discover, with surprise and horror but also with unprecedented delight and relief, not only forbidden desires and suppressed instincts but also ideas, symbols, stories and myths, images and sounds that can effect a fascinating expansion of its horizons, its knowledge, its new wisdom, its taste and its judgement. The unconscious not only consists of chaotic and unruly contents, as appears from the standpoint of modern identity. The unconscious has its own judgement and memory, so long as it also discriminates, selects, remembers and judges, and it performs these with a surprising wisdom. For it seems that it lives more intensely in the rhythms of the cosmic becoming and lies connected with immemorial times. It is the unconscious that witnessed and remembers the experiences of our ancestors and the mysteries of life in its perennial births, deaths and rebirths; being woven by the unique thread of our own unrepeatable individuality blended with the history and pre-history of the cosmos, recounting thus the ages of the world.

Man must be granted an essence outside and above the world; for how could he alone, of all creatures, retrace the long path of developments from the present back into the deepest night of the past, how could he alone rise up to the beginning of things unless there were in him an essence from the beginning of all times? Drawn from the sources of things and akin to it, what is essential of the soul has a co-science/ con-consciousness (*Mitt-Wissenschaft*) of creation. . . . Because this essence holds time enveloped, it serves as a link that enables man to make an immediate connection with the most ancient past as well with the most distant future. Man often sees himself transposed into such wonderful relations and inner connections through precisely this innermost essence, such as when he encounters a moment in the present as one long past, or a distant event as if he himself were witness to it! Accordingly, the unfathomable, prehistoric age rests in this essence; . . . But this archetypal image of things slumbers within it – not, indeed, as an extinguished and forgotten image, but rather as an image growing with its own essence that it cannot take out of itself and call upon. This image would certainly never awake again, if a presentiment [*Ahnung*] of and longing for knowledge did not lie in that unknowing itself.²⁰

The unconscious is mostly conceived as the immanent longing, rising from the depths of the self for the expression of the latter's inner life,

providing the self with an incomparable strength and a different type of security. This is not the fragile security of the constant identity, but that which the self discovers through the liberation of its unacknowledged potential, the welcoming of its 'other' and the recognition of its genuine autonomy, the courage to face it and interact with it. Schelling invites us to an open confrontation with our 'other', and yet he reminds us that this is not mostly 'ours'. For the human soul, as a part of the world, participates in its enigma and thereby not only an individual but also a historical consciousness could never assimilate it by means of its transparent recollection.

Hegel also suggested – mainly in his major work the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (PS) (1807) – the conceptualisation of the self in terms of its self-constitution, of its *Bildung*, by means of its successive formative experiences. However, in Hegel, experience always takes the form of frustration, apparently not because Hegel was unaware of other emotions, but because the self always assumes an initial self-positing self-certainty. To be sure, Hegel mainly attempts to provide a phenomenology of the formation of modern identity, which is thus characterised by the inevitable, continuous collapses of the roles that it assumes at every stage, as well as by the illusory certainty that it can appropriate the 'other' and make the circumstances conform to its own posittings. However, Hegel expounds his project from the standpoint of self-consciousness, and, moreover, a self-consciousness that proves to be able to gradually educate itself through its continuous struggle for recognition. This seems to be the highest form – as the most spiritual manifestation – of desire. The battle takes place mostly among conflictual self-consciousnesses, whose contradictions necessitate the overcoming of the narrow, individual level and the restoration of the social and historical arena, as the field proper for the unfolding of the recurrent contradictions. In this way, Hegel presents self-consciousness only from the perspective of its perennial intention to assimilate the 'other', to establish its – indubitably sophisticated and highly cultivated – identity, in a context where historical retrospective self-consciousness could successfully recollect its experiences and write the history of the world.

Instead, for Schelling, the field of the contradictions consists in the unsolvable paradoxes permeating man and the world, coming from the 'prehistoric ages' and heralding an unpredictable future. Schelling suggests a dual, conflictual positing of conscious and unconscious wills, and moreover, the recognition of their free and relatively autonomous activity. Accordingly, the confrontation with the 'other', inside and outside

the self, may lead not only to frustration, as the self's standpoint is not exclusively the confirmation of its initial identity, but also to fascination and pleasure, precisely by virtue of discovering something beyond and different from itself, which reveals the richness of the world. Thus, the world and its history appear not only in the language of our conceptual reconstructions and classifications, but also in the oracular language of the unconscious, as it presents itself in nebulous dreams, elusive fantasies, morbid symptoms, unheard voices, speaking images, puzzling symbols, incomprehensible and yet full of meaning *logogrifs*, in the ineffable movements of our bodies and the betraying colours of our emotions. All these languages seem to express a new type of *Bildung*, as manifestation of the enigmatic wisdom infusing the cosmic becoming. This wisdom transpires from chaos and order, darkness and light, destruction and creation, cruelty and love, sense and spirit, words and silence. It occupies a unique place in all ancient mythologies and religions, represented in the most versatile and contradictory divine female figures, the most ancient goddess *Sophia*, mother and mistress of *Logos*, now sensuous and seductive, now spiritual and protective, shiny, warming, transparent, veiled, blackened or reddened, inaccessible, tender and cruel, virgin and muse, receptive and giving, destructive and creative.

Reason, reflecting on its origin, can arise in an enriched form. No longer drained and rigid, but imbued with the moisture of wisdom, it may acquire new plasticity and an imaginative dimension. *Logos* discovers that is not the exclusive creator of the world, since inside it, before it uttered the word, *Sophia* was dwelling silently and meaningfully.

Schelling is the only philosopher of the modern era who mentions this interesting relation between *Logos* and *Sophia*, bringing back to philosophy the expelled goddess, mainly associated with unknown, dark, pre-cosmic forces, but also with generative, colourful, illuminating ones, mother and lover of *Logos*.

The peoples of the Orient have clearly recognised a playful pleasure at the beginning of the life of God, which they have eloquently termed Wisdom; it is an unblemished mirror of divine force and (due to passive qualities) an image of his benevolence. With astonishing precision, they everywhere ascribed of a passive than active nature to this essence. For this reason, they did not call it, (as we have been doing, the) spirit; nor did they call it (the) Word (or the *Logos*), although wisdom was often (incorrectly) confused with this term. Rather they ascribed a feminine name to it to suggest that this essence is only passive and receptive, in contrast to the higher essence.

Language in a book that is rightly considered divine drifts over us like a fresh morning breeze from the holy dawn of the world, language that introduces Wisdom in speech. 'The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before he did anything. I was set up from eternity, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills am I brought forth. When he prepared the heavens above, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth; when he appointed the foundations [*Grund*] of the earth, then I was by him, (as one brought up with him): and I was daily his pleasure, playing always (by) him.'

With these words, Wisdom is sharply distinguished from the *Lord*. The Lord possessed Wisdom, but she was not herself the Lord. She was with him before the beginning, before he did anything. . . .

Wisdom was by the Lord. But who is the *Lord*? Indisputably he is that will which rests *within* being and what-is, the will through which alone being can actually be being and what-is can actually be what-is . . . he is the expressing of all essence.²¹

Here, Schelling has discovered the imaginatively creative *Logos*, but not yet the active *Sophia*, even though, from the *Of Human Freedom* essay, he emphasised the will-of-depths as the 'sublime mother of the understanding'. It is in the *Deities of Samothrace* that he will fully appreciate the discoveries of his own thought, discovering also the proper *gods* who can accommodate them.

But did Schelling, at this stage, want Dionysus back? Dionysus is always present and yet absent. This is his nature. He suddenly appears with tumult and terror, shaking all present regularity, but he disappears even more unexpectedly, perhaps, precisely when we need him the most, and sinks into his original place, the moist element, the Styx Lake,²² or in the deep of the flowing rivers and the springing fountains, where fairies, elves and sorcerers dwell. This is the location where our dreams, desires, fears, agonies, longings, our images of past and future and our dances in the festivity of time lie. Dionysus does not compel us, does not force us. He only sets his chorus, his *thiasos*, to play the *aulos*, the forbidden musical instrument from Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*, and he offers us his tastes, his smells and his rhythms. Thus he seduces us to his manic

dance, in the moist element, in his magic liquid that paradoxically, though water-like, rekindles fire, and he drives us back to our dark and unknown self, only to strengthen us in order to make us able to face it, to experience it, through his weapons: mirth, wine, ivy and *aulos*. For, the confrontation with our unconscious, the liquidation of our *persona*, the dissolution of rigid conceptual schemata is not a conceptual enterprise that only requires the strenuous effort of a highly activated intelligence, but can rather be attained through the transformation of our *thymos*. This is the main gift of Dionysus; the provision of a liberating courage, the imagination of the soul and *thymos*, which apart from character also means anger. Hence, if the biblical God, with his 'let there be light', inaugurates the decisive separation of darkness and light, of unconscious and conscious, Dionysus overthrows this regime, smashes the new order and blurs the boundaries, intermingling the two worlds. This is where Schelling, in his own philosophical way, attempts to transpose us. Thus he induces us to discover our gods, inside and outside us.

But do we ever return from the manic dance? Does Schelling want us back from Dionysus? From what we have seen so far, it seems that the crucial issue, if personality is to be a dynamic process, is the *maintaining* of the conflict between the conscious and unconscious, the enduring interfusion of the two worlds. In fact, out of this conflict a 'third' always arises. The conscious always attempts to appropriate this 'third', to normalise it, to round it. This is the deeper meaning of the identity of the self – indeed a *duty* to identity – in Kant, of the 'synthesis' of the original ego in Fichte. The unconscious, for its part, will also try to engulf it in its depths. However, the 'third' is much more intractable and elusive: child of the conscious and the unconscious, by virtue of its double nature, it stands untameable and contradictory, in the midst of its contenders: Logic, Will, Nature, Morality, God, Society, History, Being, Abyss. . . .

What is the fate of this 'third'? What is going to express it? Who is going to possess it? Schelling seems to be reluctant to give it away to any of its beloved claimants. He rather suggests that we transform the conflict into creative deeds, which rather than resolving the conflict, enable its paradoxical and challenging development. Our participation in the Dionysian dance is precisely the preparation we need for the intensification of our creative dimension. During this experience we are taught the art of surrender and resistance, we experience the

liberation from all old bonds, we discover, to our surprise, immense hidden energy being locked by our inert soul and body. For the Dionysian *mania* transmits a new type of *sophrosyne* – Sophia's daughter? – to those who welcome it, while a ferocious punishment to those who refuse it.²³

Being thus transformed, we do not remain for ever surrendered to the manic dissolution, but we feel the inexorable need to channel our new energy into action and creative deeds. This is the expanded meaning of artistic productivity, which does not pertain only to a genius or to a gifted artist, but to whoever allows himself to discover and express his creative dimension through his various activities. This is, in turn, the sphere where freedom lies, namely in the process of creative, extrovert expression of the perennial conflict inside our soul, which lets itself be exposed to, listens to, and is fascinated by the paradoxes of the world. In this process we discover our limitations and the limits of these limitations themselves. We experience our violence and selfishness, harmony and generosity, the freedom to effect good and evil. The latter seems to be the inevitable manifestations of each entity's activation of its various potencies in the struggle for its self-expression, the conditions of its very movement. Good and evil are but the transient forms which the relation between the self and its other takes in its movement, now in tune and mutually supportive, now clashing and ruthlessly internecine. Good and evil are the moral connotations of the inevitable configurations recurring in the dynamic interaction among entities, since the latter are finite and none of them can assume an absolute status – which would imply that becoming itself would be arrested by its, that is, the absolute entity's, utter predominance. In this context Schelling announces freedom as essentially consisting in our ability to do both good and evil, that is, to incessantly activate our contradictory potencies, contra a static clinging to abstract rules of action. From this point of view, man can never – and indeed should not – be beyond good and evil. It seems that it is again the freedom of creative productivity that can disentangle the self from the stifling web of moral labels and duties. For this kind of finite freedom does not prioritise the need for social recognition, since satisfaction or frustration springs mainly from the product itself. The latter, though, rather than effecting the feeling of complete harmony in the producer, generates new tensions through its demanding criteria of judgement, so long as it condenses the outcomes of a deeper conflict and carries with it the history of immemorial battles, confrontations, hopes and anxieties. It crystallises, in a unique and more critical way,

the producer's complex connections with society, nature, religions, cultures and indeed in their historical dimension. From this point of view, it constitutes a much more challenging and respectful judge than that of current social and cultural norms. It therefore demands a critical distance on behalf of the producer, a temporal withdrawal from the buzz of current critics and admirers, in order to achieve stronger and deeper bonds with the world itself and its history. Solitude seems to be necessary, in order for the creator to be able to rethink and rediscover old and new forms of social bonds, which in turn will again prove to be both liberating and constraining, setting the scene for new ruptures, breaks and transformations.

The 'third' then, the child of the conscious–unconscious battle, seems to transitively dwell in the products of desire (*maust*), thought (*mysti*) and memory (*maúdiĵan*), namely in the evasive process of myth-making, as the previous semantic elements are but the Sanskrit roots of the word *μῦθος*, myth. This is where Schelling eventually invites us, and this is the way he finds more adequate for accommodating the paradoxes of the world and his elusive thought. Schelling has already stressed the significance of mythology in the *STI*, as the medium that brought all the individual streams of knowledge into the 'universal ocean of poetry', before the radical breach between science and poetry, philosophy and art. The need for the restoration of this breach inaugurates the possibility for the rise of a *new mythology*: a task, though, which belongs to a future historical era.

Philosophy was born and nourished by poetry in the infancy of knowledge, and with it all those sciences it has guided toward perfection; we may thus expect them, on completion, to flow back like so many individual streams into the universal ocean of poetry from which they took their source. Nor is it in general difficult to say that the medium for this return of science to poetry will be; for in mythology such a medium existed, before the occurrence of a breach now seemingly beyond repair. But how a new mythology is itself to arise, which shall be the creation, not of some individual author, but of a new race personifying, as it were, one single poet – that is a problem whose solution can be looked for only in the future destinies of the world, and in the course of history to come.²⁴

Although Schelling did not further develop this insightful idea, we can extract some of the features of his conception of a new mythology from the last sections of the *STI*. We suggest that Schelling's generative and inchoate forethoughts on the notion of a new mythology inhere in his brief account of the character of the work of art and the relation between art and philosophy. As we have seen, Schelling introduced the insightful notion of productive intuition, through which conscious and unconscious activity, producing and thinking are considered as parts of the same unifying productivity. However, in the *STI*, productive intuition appears as a split activity in the stages of sensation, reflection and will, while it recovers its unity only in the aesthetic production. In the latter, according to Schelling, for the first time the unity of conscious and unconscious activities is manifested. Art, as opposed to philosophy, realises the expression of the unconscious in acting and producing:

... it is self-evident that art is at once the only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy, which ever and again continues to speak to us of what philosophy cannot depict in external form, namely the unconscious element in acting and producing, and its original identity with the conscious.²⁵

Despite our objections regarding the exclusivity ascribed to art – as the only sphere of expressing the unconscious and, indeed, as that in which the *absolute identity* between the conscious and unconscious is attainable – the first feature that can be drawn from this position with regard to the conception of the new mythology, is that this indicates a form of expression that allows the unconscious to 'speak' – in its own language – through action and creative production. But why is this identity – effected by the work of art in the *STI* – so important?

Art is paramount to the philosopher, precisely because it opens to him, as it were, the holy of the holies, where burns in eternal and original unity, as if in a single flame, that which in nature and history is rent asunder, and in life and action, no less than in thought, must forever fly apart.²⁶

Art's unique significance derives from its power to reveal the sacred in the world, and from this point of view, art itself is a form of mythology. In turn, the new mythology seems to emerge from the various forms of the sacred revealed by artistic production. The sacred, though, in the

STI is the all-inclusive, absolute act of original self-consciousness, the 'holy of the holies', whose revelation consummates all movement:

If this point in production is reached, the production must absolutely stop, and it must be impossible for the producer to go on producing; for the condition of all producing is precisely the opposition between conscious and unconscious activity; but here they have absolutely to coincide, and thus within the intelligence all conflict has to be eliminated, all contradiction reconciled.²⁷

The revelation of the Absolute in the work of art restores the absolute identity between man and the world, and therefore renders the riddle of the cosmos transparent:

what we speak of as nature is a poem lying pent in a mysterious and wonderful script. Yet the riddle could reveal itself, were we to recognise in it the odyssey of the spirit, which, marvellously deluded, seeks itself, and in seeking flies from itself; for through the world of the sense there glimmers, as if through words the meaning, as if through dissolving mists the land of fantasy, of which we are in search. Each splendid painting owes, as it were, its genesis to a removal of the invisible barrier dividing the real from the ideal world, and is no more than the gateway, through which come forth completely the shapes and scenes of that world of fantasy which gleams but imperfectly through the real.²⁸

The announcement of the new mythology, just a year before the Identity System, could not possibly have other features than the promise of the ultimate revelation of the Absolute. However, even in this form, Schelling broaches the powerful idea of the possibility of the rediscovery of the 'holy' in this world through our creative productivity. This insight acquires its dynamism only when Schelling dismisses the concept of 'the holy of the holies' and instead, discovers the sacred as multiple, transmutable, disclosable and elusive, shiny and obscure, eternal and mortal, emerging and vanishing from all forms of life and becoming. This shift started from the *Of Human Freedom* treatise and signalled a new phase in Schelling's thought, which develops through its ongoing transformation in the *AW* up to the *Deities of Samothrace*. It is this last work that may better accommodate Schelling's radical vision of the possibility of the rise of a new mythology.

The *Deities of Samothrace* is never mentioned as an important philosophical work in Schelling's intellectual history. At most, it is presented as a supplement to the *AW*, reducing its ideas to the former's.²⁹ Instead, we find in it Schelling's most fascinating philosophical messages, which provide his previous philosophical investigations with new dimensions and perspective. In the *Of Human Freedom* treatise, Schelling discovered the evil in God and the intractable longing – the unruly of the depths – which nurtures all life, becoming and creativity. In the *AW*, he discovered the silent and plastic *Sophia*, dwelling in this dark longing, endowing it with order and chaos, harshness and mildness, indifference and commitment. The *Deities of Samothrace* would appear to be generated as if Schelling himself reflects – with love – upon his own longing to savour the paradoxes of the cosmos and articulates in a *logografic* form his new discoveries.

As *logografic* this form does not attempt to posit its own Absolute, even in the cunning form of the declaration of the Absolute's death. It does not proclaim that it is the highest medium that explains the world. This form, rather, prefers to mock any claims on absolute transparency and provides us with old and new riddles, showing *thus* the paths that reconnect the various streams of knowledge.

In this phase of Schelling's intellectual development, cosmic becoming is not condensed in the destiny of the self-enveloped, primordial, absolute synthesis, but appears as the multifarious and unpredictable movement of an inscrutable cosmic theurgy. The 'odyssey of spirit' has no return point, not because spirit cannot manage to break the barriers between the real and ideal world or never breaks through the mist of the senses. In this work, spirit appears and vanishes, multicoloured and obscure, liberating and compelling, all-present and invisible, in the very visible process of life itself, in the riddle of its self-procreation, destruction and regeneration. It is not bizarre then for Schelling to be attracted by the paradoxical deities of Samothrace – the enigmatic Cabeiri – whose mysteries were dedicated to the mystery of life, in its multiple transformations and the magic inherent in them. What Schelling has conceptually grasped as indifference in the *AW*, now becomes a real power; the power of procreation and life, which springs from the borderline of the subjective and the objective, as the moment of their indifference, which may reveal and express longing's inner contradictions but may also *not express* them. 'The unconditioned can

express itself as what-is and as being, and it can refrain from expressing itself as both; in other words, it can be both, or it can let both alone. Free will is just this ability to be something along with the ability to not-be-it'.³⁰ But the life of the cosmos, as the movement of self-generative, procreative and destructive powers, is elusively depicted as the life of known and unknown gods. This is why the deities of Samothrace, whose nature is still concealed in darkness, can accommodate Schelling's thought. For the image of the cosmos they evoke is not the transparent revelation of the mythology of *Phanes*, a mythology of original and ultimate order, but the image of a *logogrif*, which anticipates a mythology of both order and chaos. The unity of this image does not reveal an absolute, original, all-inclusive act, but the 'magic of insoluble life', in its multiplicity, orderly and unruly movement, expressing man's direct encounter not only with the forces of order but also with the forces of chaos. The *logogrific* expression of this magic, consequently, cannot be attained merely by a profound thought process – as a more complex conceptual representation – but by a more inclusive experience which stimulates all living forces in man's being and allows him not only to seize but also to be seized by the cosmic powers. Hence, *logogrif* becomes a form of life, an intense experience of battle or play with the riddles of the world, a real force in the field of fusion between man and the cosmos which provides new dimensions in the world, rendering it, as ever, accessible and inaccessible, familiar and enigmatic.

We can now see Schelling's philosophical insights from his engagement with the messages of this 'mysterious polytheism'. In the *STI* Schelling stated that in order to capture some distinctive 'epochs' of the history of self-consciousness, the philosopher should perform an act of imitation of the original absolute synthesis. In fact, by this, Schelling makes a mythological claim, since the suggested imitation essentially constitutes an attempt at re-enacting the origins of the cosmos. The act of imitation is a modern ritual, to be performed by the philosopher. In the *Deities of Samothrace*, Schelling – in a way – imitates not the original, absolute synthesis, but the elusive drama of the Cabeiri, and thus his creative reconstruction offers us the new 'epochs' of his paradoxical cosmogony.

7

The Deities of Samothrace: towards Schelling's Λογογραφική

Samothrace is the name for the visible part of a conic, shaky, volcanic mountain top, always being, mysteriously, surrounded by a cloud ring, that rises above the wavy and windy waters of the northern part of the Aegean Sea.

The island as a whole consists in a continuous, inaccessibly forested mountain chain which is abruptly broken by vertical cliffs, dark chasms – whose sight disappears into the depths of the subterranean volcanic rock – powerful waterfalls and innumerable springs; namely, an elusive continuity of sudden breaks, in such a way as if the island by its very compelling presence speaks out the disrupted unity among chthonic, earthly and heavenly realms, life, death and rebirth, in pace with the cyclical flow of waterfalls and springs, and the alternating rhythms of the volcanic convulsions and the restful breath of the cloud ring. It has been surmised by historians that the island was populated in the first instance by people venturing out to sea, far-sailing foreigners – most probably Pelasgians or Phoenicians – who along with ‘incense, purple dye and ivory there also transplanted their gods and sanctuaries’.¹

Samothrace has had a reputation since antiquity for its Cabeiri mysteries, which are considered to be the most ancient and important mysteries of ancient times, as equally or even more honoured as the Eleusinian. This is why Samothrace is characterised as χώρα ζαθη, namely sacred land, hostess of wondrous orgies of gods, unnameable to mortals, as the Orphic hymn informs us,

Ζαθη Σαμοθρακη,
ενθα και οργια φρικτα θεων
αρρητα βροτοισιν.

(Orphica Argonautica 468)

This is the place and time – the indeterminate transitive period between magic and Greek Spirit, post-'barbarian' and pre-Hellenic – that Schelling chooses as accommodation for his philosophical thought. The AW seem to be seized by this magnetic land and need to stop here, to listen and recount its story.

The significance of the Cabeiri deities still lies in darkness and the beliefs, practices and events surrounding their cult are characterised by particular mystery and obscurity. Their names and numbers remain indeterminate, as do the meaning and the role of each individual deity. It seems, though, that this obscurity not only derives from their remoteness in the night of time or the limits of historiological research, but mostly from their very nature, which appears as flexible, transmutable and mainly *theurgic*, namely creative and generative of new, higher or lower deities. It is mainly from the standpoint of their theurgic dimension that we hazard to explore the messages of this 'mysterious polytheism'.

As far as the origins of the Cabeiri is concerned, there have been a plethora of surmises and suggestions from the various fields of mythology, history, philology and etymology, whose details are not our concern, since this very multiplicity of suggestions – indeed supplementary ones – only betrays their manifold nature. Hence, we find them as Uranus' children – Titans' brothers – or ancient demons of the volcanoes of the Thracian Sea, giants or dwarfs, Koryvantes from Phrygia, as sons of Zeus and Electra or sons of Prometheus, almighty or lower deities. The most predominant surmise, though, that Schelling also seems to prefer, is that the Cabeiri originate from Hephaestos, the divine smith whom Hera expelled from Olympus due to his natural deficiency, who, though lame in both legs, is the only god who knows the secrets of motion, possibly because of his extraordinary knowledge of fire, the unique gift on which even Zeus confesses to be dependent. The Cabeiri, as Hephaestos' offspring, children of fire and the art of fabrication, are also mentioned as καιοντες, namely burning and πυρογενεις, i.e. fire-generic, rising from the earth's bowels and transfusing their fire-like energy to their invokers; their sudden epiphany has also been registered as exceptionally paradoxical, more obscure than shiny, extremely helpful or ruthlessly paralysing, in any case effecting a spectacular transformation to anyone who discovers them.

However, the most distinctive feature of the Cabeiri, as already mentioned, is their *theurgic* nature. Schelling repeatedly stresses this element: 'One could say of them that they are not so much divine as they are god-producing, theurgic natures, and the whole chain presents itself more and more as theurgic.'²

How could we understand the movement of the Cabeiri as theurgic but also as a chain? It seems that their movement transpires again the unity of cosmos, what has been philosophically and theologically registered as oneness, and yet the latter conceived not as an external supernatural and mystical divinity – as is the case with monotheistic or even polytheistic traditions, which cut off the divine from the natural and reduce it to a noble, universal substance – but as the miraculous unity which springs from every act of creation, life and birth, and infuses the cosmic becoming throughout. Creation then, does not refer to one original act performed once, in the beginning of time, by an external Demiurge and moreover, nor to the imposition of order upon primordial chaos. Creation is the ever-recurrent act in all processes of life, movement, birth, growth and procreation, and as such inextricably linked to death, decay and degeneration. Creation comes as the outcome of the resolution of the highest contradiction and the living confirmation and expression of it. It comes as the externalisation of the highest conflict between the cosmic potencies, the will that negates expression and leads to contraction and the will that strives for fulfilment and expansion. Schelling has already written in the *AW*:

One and the same will is activated as the will that wills nothing and is also activated as the will that wills something (life and actuality). Because the highest contradiction is necessarily also the highest movement of life, it can thus be seen here and from the outset that an absolute decision is demanded. . . . How is a decision possible here? Perhaps someone might say that one of the wills is by nature subservient to the other, in which case it would necessarily be overcome by the other will, and this other be the victor. But this presupposition is false.³

This would be the case of the creation of order by a victorious benevolent creator, triumphing over nature. However, 'both wills are by nature equally important, each has the same right to be active, and it is necessarily true that neither retreats before the other'.⁴

How then is a decision possible here? According to Schelling, the decision comes through the simultaneous activity of both wills in full intensity, where contradiction reaches its peak and as such encapsu-

lates the highest tension. Out of this moment of highest energy, creation bursts forth as an act of highest love. This is not an act of planned decision, nor the outcome of a wilful agent, but, simply and miraculously, it is the mystery of life itself, in its infinite manifestations. For, according to Schelling, the very existence of cosmic becoming is itself a perennial and recurrent act of love.⁵ Love does not generate only the products of order, good or beauty, but *is the very process of life and becoming*, the magic of perennial creativity in the cosmos, in its paradoxical continuity, breaks, destructions and rebirths. It is this procreative love and the magic involved in it that the notion of theurgy attempts to grasp. But the unity which this theurgy creates remains inexpressible, unutterable,⁶ and it can only possibly, partially and momentarily be encountered through the *experience* of the epiphany of gods. This is possibly the reason why the Cabeiri were mainly *relived* through their *φρικτὰ ὄργια*, the famous *Cabeirian mysteries*, rather than taught through official institutions. This is also what is signified by the qualitative leap in Schelling's thought from the *AW* to the *Deities of Samothrace*, namely, the move from what has been conceptually uttered in the *Ages* to what is now only a part of the life of gods, whose whole movement remains *ἀρρητη*.

The various potencies and wills which we meet in the *AW* now become gods, not because Schelling is trapped into a naïve personification or anthropomorphic approach, but because it is, possibly, the notion of gods that may better accommodate the elusiveness, dynamism, self-generative and mostly *ἀρρητη* (ineffable) nature of the cosmic becoming, and as such both *immanent and transcendent* with regard to man. From this perspective, the divine does not assume a wholly separate, transcendent status, and moreover does not constitute a unique, static, self-contained, holy substance, and yet is not exhausted as man's inner forces, by his psychic and spiritual potencies, since man – as a finite part of the cosmos – being himself a specific complex of potencies, lies in the midst of cosmic forces, lower and higher, similar and different from him, seizing them and being seized, controlling them and subject to them. Man may be able to discover the gods inside him, but they may mostly appear to him through their unexpected and compelling epiphany.

The Cabeiri in turn, considered as separate deities, seem to express the various unities of tensions, depicting the various moments of

cosmic becoming; each deity stands for a fragile and generative state, as a complex of contradicting potencies that produces new ones. Each deity is then product of an other and yet *indifferent* to its other, since it is theurgic by itself, has a self-generative, free and independent dimension, its own *uniqueness*. In the *AW*, Schelling has already stressed:

This entire life, after all, originated in the first place out of the longing of eternity for itself. All merely germinal life is of itself full of longing; it increasingly demands to emerge from mute, ineffective unity and to be lifted instead into an active unity. In the same way we see the whole of nature to be equally full of longing; the earth sucks the force of heaven into itself through countless mouths; the seed strives toward light and air, in order to catch sight of an image, a spirit; the flower sways in the sun's rays in order to pull them into itself as colour.⁷

It is Ceres or Demeter, the Cabeiri deity Axieros, who now accommodates longing, this ever-infusing activity and ever-present mode of being:

But according to the literal translation of the first name, Axieros, in the Phoenician dialect cannot very well mean other than (in the first instance) 'hunger', 'poverty', and in consequence 'yearning', 'seeking'. . . . Another image of this first nature, whose whole essence is desire and passion, appears in the consuming fire which so to speak is in itself nothing, is in essence only a hunger drawing everything to itself. Hence the ancient precept: fire is the most inward, therefore also the oldest; through the subduing of fire everything first began to be a world. Thus it was that Hestia came to be revered as the oldest (first) of beings, and the concepts of Ceres and Proserpina, the most ancient deities, became intertwined with that of Hestia. The feminine character of this many-named being points to the concepts of longing and of yearning desire, as do all names of the first nature either obscurely or clearly; so especially the nature of Ceres, whom the ancient historian interpreted as the first Samothracian deity, arises wholly as yearning passion.⁸

Demeter appears as lack, as the night of nothingness, of non-being, and yet she is the creating goddess, 'the moving power through whose ceaseless attraction everything, as if by magic, is brought from the primal indeterminateness to actuality or formation'.⁹ For her, night, which appears as the realm of the invisible and inexpressible, the mute

and the silent, is the night of the most intense contraction of all creative powers, as the blackness of the contraction of all colours, and as such, her night is at once light and colours, life and word. Demeter stands for the inextricable connection between fertility and death, the perennial creativity and destruction pertaining in the 'universal magic and the theurgy ever abiding in the whole universe, through which the invisible, indeed the super-actual, incessantly is brought to revelation and actuality'.¹⁰

What the relation of this Demeter with the Homeric one is, we do not know. We learn though from the *Homeric Hymn* that Demeter laid Demophöon – the son of the king of Eleusis – into the fire in order to give him her major gift, namely, immortality. What appeared, to the eyes of the ignorant mortals, as Demophöon's loss and destruction, was what would render him immortal, eternally young. This is why Demeter decided to teach humans the Eleusinian mysteries, that is, in order to show them the immanent link between creativity and destruction, fertility and death, loss and rebirth, and to infuse them with love and faith to the theurgy of insoluble life. This is also the message that the Cabeirian Demeter sends. Her fire melts and dissolves everything, and out of this burning and consuming fire everything springs out and regenerates itself. As such, Demeter carries the burning torches, the symbol of yearning passion and persistent flame, which keeps movement alive and regenerates life out of death. For Demeter is love herself, the love of longing and burning desire for Persephone, which is actuality, visibility, sensuality, expression, concrete life, rebirth, but mainly, Demeter's love is mostly anger and inexhaustible strength to get back what she lost. She is Demeter loving and nurturing but mostly Demeter Erinyes, the powerful and threatening goddess who despises Zeus and forces him to retreat in the sight of her frightening fury. As such, Demeter carries the moon-shaped sickle, the symbol of linkage between fertility and death, now as an act of love and violence, reminding us that every creative act is accompanied with an act of violence, as the corn has to be cut in order to spread its seeds, as Aphrodite and Erinyes both sprung from the blood of the castrated Uranus.

We find then Demeter-*karpophoros*, the bringer of fruits, and also Demeter-Black, Demeter-Erinyes and Nemesis, Demeter-Mother, Despoina and Demeter-Mistress, young and aged, beautiful and impressive, repulsive and imperceptible, grievous and triumphant, vulnerable and powerful, longing in its multiple configurations. But 'the flower sways in the sun's rays in order to pull them into itself as colour', and Demeter turns to Helios – the Sun god and the only witness, with

Ecate, of her daughter's rape – and becomes Persephone, colourful and tangible, goddess of sensuality and careless games. The world of actuality, though, is but an episode of the cosmic drama and every concrete entity carries within it all the dormant forces out of which it has emerged and into which it will sink again, its invisible past and future. Persephone breathes Demeter and Demeter embodies Persephone, identical and different, as the 'intelligible dyad', 'together construct the cosmos through a twofold magic'.¹¹

Persephone teaches the immanent spirituality of the sensual and is the one who dares to experience Demeter's teaching, for Persephone allowed her loss in the Underworld in order to emerge again, reborn, wiser, and even more sensual. For it is in the Underworld that she experienced the taste of the pomegranate, symbol of fertility, and yet she became Queen of the Dead. The paradox of the connection between fertility and death reaches its peak in this second Cabeiri god, Axiokersa or Persephone, goddess of sensuality and the pleasures of life and Queen of the Dead, both. But it seems that it is precisely by virtue of her sensuality that she is Queen of the Dead. For Persephone, as concrete sensuality, is *unique* and *unrepeatable*, 'the one who weaves the garment of mortality',¹² and thus stands for the uniqueness and unrepeatability of every actual episode in the cosmic becoming, as a unique manifestation of the fragile balance of the infinite forces concurring in its expression. Nevertheless, this uniqueness transpires its past and future metamorphoses, the invisible world, chthonic and heavenly, intangibly sensual and unintelligibly spiritual, where Persephone reigns. Hence, Persephone is Queen of the Dead in a double paradoxical sense, affirming both the transience and persistence of things, their uniqueness and recurrence, vanishing and yet present in the theurgic chain of insoluble life. Persephone, the seductive goddess with the slim ankles, with narcissus and pomegranates in her hands, careless Kore and Hades' wife, dwells in both worlds, visible and invisible, and calls us to accompany her in her adventures.

Persephone is a sorceress, as the initial beginning of future bodily existence, as the one who weaves the garment of mortality and generates the deception of the senses, but most generally as the first link of that chain extending from the depths to the heights, binding together beginning and end. Persephone is even called 'Maja', a name which reminds us more than a little of magic.¹³

Persephone reborn, though, is no longer the same, the careless Kore. It is not only the sudden abduction, the marriage through rape, the

pomegranate, the surprise, the shock, the loss of herself and her mother, the grief, the discovery of a new world, that gave rise to her change. It is mostly that she herself now becomes mother of herself, giving birth to her new self, transforming herself into a new god, Dionysus, the third Cabeiri god.

If Persephone discovered new dimensions of sensuality in the realm of spirituality, for it is in the Underworld that she tasted the pomegranate, Dionysus discovers new spirituality in the realm of the senses themselves. Dionysus, carrier of a wine vessel and ivy leaves, Lucius, that is, liberator, announces an unprecedented dimension of freedom through the expansion of sensual experience. It is the freedom of the involuntary movements of a body which responds to the Bacchic rhythms, perceives new colours, hears unheard sounds, discovers forbidden pleasures, and creates new bonds with the mind, which also expands its horizons and discovers new worlds, of visions and images, so far closed off by its restricting concepts. Mind, then, feels itself to be seized by divine madness, this necessary *eiskrisis*, what we now call inspiration, which renders it productive, imaginative, creative and destructive. Body and mind rediscover their unity in the marriage of sensuality and spirituality, in its most intense expression, in 'the blessings of madness',¹⁴ in the miracle of life, in the act of procreation and perennial regeneration. For Dionysus is himself the miraculous child of an absurd marriage, namely that of the goddess of sensuality with the god of death, and the conditions of his birth and recurrent rebirths are even more absurd.

Dionysus has been born and reborn many times, by different gods and mortals, by Persephone and Hades, by Zeus and Semele, by Demeter and Athena, as many as he has been persecuted, arrested, murdered and dismembered. He suffers and dies, but there is always, paradoxically, a goddess who saves him, now Athena-Pallas, who rescues his *pallomeni*, that is vibrating heart, now Demeter, who reconnects with fire his fragments. Dionysus carries the fire-like features of his mothers, but he is also mild and plastic. Rising out of the moist depths of the Underworld, he hydrates, moderates and gives new plasticity and form to the harshness of the consuming fire of his primal mothers. Joyous, vital, sensual, he recalls the initial careless sensuality of Persephone and celebrates the freedom of an unsuspecting present. Yet, this present holds the history of the cosmos in it, and heralds its

future lives. Dionysus, the magic child, as generator of new forces, becomes harbinger of new forms of life and is transformed into Hermes or Kasmillos, the fourth Cabeirian god.

Hermes is the traveller god, who transfers the messages between the two worlds, in which Dionysus unreflectively has dwelled. Longing, which has passed from burning desire to plastic sensuality, now seems to reflect upon itself, to announce itself, to discern its transformations, to foretell its future ones. Hermes, with his golden sandals, flies like the wind from one world to the other, sends messages from past to future, enlivens memories and dreams, but also organises plots and plans and carries the magic wand, the golden rod which suddenly gives luck or misfortune, fulfils or destroys the plans that he inserted in mortals' minds. He is called the guide of dreams and the protector of travellers, but he is also the patron of robbers and thieves and all who are expert in gaining advantage through trickery. Hermes is the first Cabeiri god who utters the word, by *announcing* his theurgy, as the forerunner of a future god. Through Hermes there is the premonition, the sense of awaiting, preparing for, even planning the creation of the future god, and thus he carries the sensation of time, the first seeds of *order*, which, yet, may suddenly spread away under a simple movement of his wand. Hermes, though, the god of communication, seems to stand as *servant* of the god whom he heralds. This is Zeus, the Highest Demiurge, god of order and justice. 'If then those preceding personalities are (inner)-worldly deities, so the god to whom they are the leader and ladder, whom Kasmillos directly serves, is the *transcendent* god, the god who rules them and thus is the lord of the world, the demiurge, or in the highest sense, Zeus.'¹⁵

Zeus stands for the order that is depicted by the transient and dynamic balances of forces in the cosmic becoming, but so long as this order appears to govern and subordinate these forces, so long as order is uttered and proclaimed as permanent, it becomes transcendent and subjugating. Zeus loses his touch with the world, ascends to the top of the Olympic Pantheon, and *recreates* the world, according to his own order, becoming thus the highest Demiurge. However, even Zeus is not a static figure, for he himself seems to violate his own rules. The god of justice and highest power becomes the initiator of deception and conspiracy, impotent in the face of Demeter's threats, dependent on Hephaestos' skills, vulnerable to his own desires. Now he sends

thunderbolts and claims his gifts from the sacrifices of the mortals, but then becomes golden rain and descends to earth to get what he desires. Zeus returns to Dionysus and Dionysus to Zeus anew.

But Dionysus is also a demiurge and indeed, so to speak, the demiurge overcoming Hephaestos who releases the creation from the bonds of necessity and sets it forth in free multiplicity. . . . Zeus is also again Dionysus. . . . That is, Zeus is again related to the first three potencies, as the second is related to the first. . . . But moreover, Dionysus returns once again to the higher potency.¹⁶

The chain now seems to bend back on itself, to close itself and enter into the rhythm of a recurrent movement. We are left with the messages of five gods. However, these seem to stand only for some distinctive moments or potencies operative in the cosmic becoming. In fact, we met an indeterminable multiplicity of potencies, since each of these gods is itself multi-natured and mainly theurgic, perennially producing new potencies.

First of all it is clear that those initial deities are the very same powers through whose action and rule the whole world chiefly was constituted; thus it is clear that they are worldly, cosmic deities. Collectively they are called Hephaestos. . . . *Hephaestos himself is not in the sequence of Cabeiri*, as little as his name appears among those of the seven planets or in the circuit of the days of the week, [which is] the key to all systems of gods, as I hope to show someday. Taken all together these preceding deities, or as we also could say, these serving deities, are Hephaestos. The creation of Hephaestos is the world of necessity. He is that which holds the All in strict constraint. But he is also the artistic sculptor of the Whole. He is also that which forms the innerworldly seat of the gods, certainly of the ones higher than he himself. . . . But Dionysus is also a demiurge and indeed, so to speak, the demiurge overcoming Hephaestos, who releases creation from the bonds of necessity and sets forth in free multiplicity.¹⁷[my emphasis]

Hephaestos does not stand as a separate deity. In the Cabeiri cosmogony there is no higher deity – what the Greeks held as *Moira* or Fate – to bind and externally predestine the cosmic becoming. It is

rather the very existence and movement of this becoming that is itself necessary. Hephaestos' world stands for the necessity of the interaction of cosmic forces and their arising orders. The potencies which weave the web of necessity are the very same ones which undo it, breaking and relinking the cosmic chain. Zeus and Dionysus play and struggle with each other, transform into each other, construct and deconstruct the cosmos and infuse it throughout. However, these deities do not exhaust life, but they are considered as merely initial, constitutive and further productive of new deities, lower or higher, latent or manifest, hidden in the uniqueness of each culture, historical epoch and human soul.

The Cabeiri and Schelling through them, utter their word more as a riddle, rather than as a revelatory doctrine. Hence, they speak the oracular language of *logogrifs*, not only with regard to what they say but mostly with regard to what they *do not say*, but only allude to. Yet, their language presents an extraordinary intensity and fullness, and manages to effect a shaking influence upon one's personality, for what they do not say they let it be experienced. This is the meaning of the *mystical* which characterises their cult practices. The mystical does not refer to any supranatural entity, nor to the allegedly closed and inaccessible character of their rituals, since the Cabeiri mysteries, precursors of the Dionysian ones, were a collective and open festivity. The mystical, instead, comes immediately from the natural element itself, which is not dead and fragmented, but transpires the miracle of life, the mystery of perennial creation; this is precisely the central meaning of the Cabeiri mysteries. These are said to be dedicated to the light of dawn, to the wondrous springing of life out of unknown cosmic forces.¹⁸ In this context, the mystical element in the experience of the mysteries does not intend to hold a redemptive function, as would be the case if the mystical were associated to an absolute spirituality and the liberation from natural bonds and sins deriving thereby. Instead, the notion of the mystical in the Cabeiri rituals attempts to describe the distinctive sensuality which emerges out of the particular atmosphere of the mysteries: the sensation of sinking in the darkness of an all-night festivity, the sudden flash of light in the midst of the darkness, the smells of burning torches and moist ivy leaves, the rhythms of vibrating cymbals, all these elements which bring Dionysus' vibrating heart close to mortals and render the divine *imminent* to man, too close

and yet too far, immanent and transcendent, palpable and invisible, present and all-infusing but ἀρρητον. In this sense, the mystical signifies the unique and exclusive mode through which each one experiences his participation in the mysteries. Yet, this mystical experience could open new, unprecedented paths of communication, understanding and knowledge of the world and one's soul, since it mostly consists in an active engagement with the divine, in an extraordinary activation of one's inner physical, psychic and mental forces, mediated through a series of symbolic deeds, the so-called δρωμενα, where 'truths' are communicated not only through their utterance but by means of their *dramatisation*. It is by means of one's δρωμενα that one discovers and creates one's ever-changing self, which allows one's blending with the riddles of the cosmic becoming, and this is also, possibly, the meaning of Schelling's statement in the *Freedom* essay that 'man's being is essentially *his own deed*'.¹⁹

We may now recover the deeper meaning of the Cabeiri messages, which seems to be the experience of the *imminence* of the divine and the personal transformation or even transmutation emerging out of it. The notion of the divine refers to both cosmic and psychic powers that arise as unpredictable and compelling as Persephone's abduction, and reveals man's both finite and infinite dimension, refuting modern man's self-deification as much as its opposite, namely, an ongoing mourning for his inexorable finitude. This experience in turn, seems to be expressible through a *logogrific* or a mythic form. Here, myth is not intended to stand for another explanatory schema or moreover for a religious doctrine; for the Cabeiri are neither abstract and anaemic concepts, nor hypostatised ontological personalities. The Cabeiri deities stand for the living, non-hierarchical, transmutable, dynamic, unpredictable, unknown and manifest potencies which constitute the paradoxes of the world, the magic of insoluble life. Hence, their mythic representation is both an *allegory* and a *tautegory*, since it attempts to name the ἀρρητον of a *real* becoming, since this form allows the inexhaustible engagement of man with the paradox of the world, as being an active part of it. It seems also that this mythic form requires the eclipse of the Absolute, since the appearance of the latter either engulfs and occupies all becoming – which appears as but a manifestation of its own homogeneous substance – or becomes transcendent and renders becoming disenchanted.²⁰

However, it is not the Cabeiri myths and their cult that intend to accommodate Schelling's vision for the creation of a new mythology. Schelling does not suggest that we should adopt their beliefs and rehearse their rituals, as the Romans did, even printing them on their coins;²¹ for only an age devoid of creative spirit lies in need of borrowing the spirit of its ancestors, only to ossify it in objects of exchange. Schelling discovers the Cabeiri spirit only in order to call us to discover our own gods, to create our own *droumena* and myths, according to our own, different and similar, experiences. The re-enchantment of this world is not going to come through the excavation of old temples, the dogmatic adoption of old religions, nor by means of the intellectual fabrication of 'invented' mystical doctrines.²² A new theurgy seems to be awaited and recalled as need, as aporia, as despair and elusive probability in a disenchanted world impregnated with most extreme contradictions. As far as the fate of the Cabeiri is concerned, 'To us the finest employment of the name would be granted in that moment when it also recalls that Cabeiri-like alliance, through which the power of a truly Typhonian realm was first broken, and at last its final convulsions stifled, one which threatened to end in general demoralisation.'²³

Conclusion: Helmet and Pomegranate

The 28-line *Homeric Hymn to Athena* attempts to present the true identity of the goddess Athena and her astonishing epiphany among the other Olympian gods:

I begin to sing of Pallas Athena, the glorious goddess, owl-eyed, inventive, unbending of heart, pure virgin, saviour of cities, courageous, Tritogeneia. From his awful head wise Zeus himself bore her arrayed in warlike arms of flashing gold, and awe seized all the gods as they gazed. But Athena sprang quickly from the immortal head and stood before Zeus who holds the aegis, shaking a sharp spear: great Olympus began to reel horribly at the might of the owl-eyed goddess, and earth round about cried fearfully, and the sea was moved and tossed with dark waves, while foam burst forth suddenly: the birth son of Hyperion stopped his swift-footed horses a long while, until the maiden Pallas Athena had stripped the heavenly armour from her immortal shoulders. And wise Zeus was glad.¹

Hence, Athena, the goddess of mind and thought – *nous kai dianoia* – has been bequeathed to later ages as the celebrated daughter of the mighty Zeus. According to the poet, the goddess knows only of a father and belongs wholly to him. No mother gave birth to her. The most famous image of the goddess comes from her Acropolis statue: armed, with her body covered by a shield and the head by a huge helmet, ready to attack or to guard; Athena Poliuchos, the great, impregnable protectress of the *polis* of Athens; her statue, sign of the Athenian valour in the Persian wars.

Athena kindles the heroes and inspirits them at the right instant. She stands by Achilles, Diomedes and other favourites in battles and

shows exceptional care to Hercules, the semi-god hero, who paves his way to the gods by his extraordinary deeds. In Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, she unambiguously declares her masculine nature: 'No mother bore me, in all things my heart turns to the male, save only for the wedlock, and I incline wholly to the father.'² And yet Athena does not stand for the brutal masculinity of the god of war, Ares. Nor her bright reasoning for the contemplative reason of Apollo. For the encouragement of the battles is always accompanied by moderation and prudence and her wisdom by practical spirit and the knowledge of skills and handicraftship. She is not predominantly the warrior goddess, but the great counsellor, the prudent admonisher and also the patroness of craftsmanship, teacher of useful skills, goddess of healing powers and peaceful arts. At this stage, Athena seems also to need a mother, and her various admirers remember the 'monstrous' aspect of the myth: Athena did not spring from Zeus' head *ex nihilo*, but because Zeus had devoured his wife, Metis, in order to avoid the Fate of his father and grandfather. However, Metis was already pregnant with Athena, who grew painfully in Zeus' head and violently burst forth out of it. As daughter of Metis – which means counsel, measure and order – Athena is also called *poly-metis*, that is many-counsellor. She is the goddess of thoughtful and practical consideration of things. She shifts knowledge from the exclusive realm of her father's power to humankind. She is interested in the emancipation of humans from the gods, in the enhancement of the civilising progress and the defence of the *polis*. She teaches skilful techniques and she admonishes humans to bridle their passions and uncontrollable desires. She guides humans in the market-place and enables them to take reasonable decisions. She invents the jury, in order to render the humans able to make their own judgements – until now hidden in the realm of the gods or the relentless *Moira* – and to wrest human consciousness from the whims of the gods.

Athena is thus the bright and benevolent goddess: the owl-eyed goddess, whose flashing eyes – as the owl's – are able to see all around and in the dark. She stands for the ability of reflection, assessment of the whole, prudent judgement. But she is not merely pensive. Her insightful mind is not detached reasoning, as her combative spirit is not unconstrained impulse. She is the goddess of thoughtful action, of reflective, recollective awareness of her actions, which leads her to the Victory, as it has been represented by Phidias's statue, where Athena holds the goddess of Nike in her right hand. As such, she is the 'owl of Minerva', who flies – victoriously – in the dusk. Nevertheless, Athena

is, above all, Zeus' daughter. For all her civilising undertakings occur under the aegis of her father. She fosters humans' emancipation from the gods, but only within the limits of Zeus' tolerance. It is with his advice that she helps his devoted heroes, while she denies aid or even horribly punishes anyone who threatens Zeus' *monokratoria* (exclusive power), anticipating thus, the paradoxical linkage between monotheism and logic. It has even been suggested that the vulture which every night pecked on Prometheus' liver, due to his disobedience to Zeus, was Athena herself.³

Athena's victory seems thus to be buttressed by Zeus' power and his incontestable order.

However, there is another, marginal myth which alludes to the possibility of a completely different account for the birth of the goddess. The myth was written by Apollodorus and Virgil and is as follows: Askalaphos was the son of Acheron – river of the Underworld – and Gorgyia – also called Orphne, that is Darkness. Askalaphos is mentioned as a tailed, semi-human, semi-lizard-like creature, and possibly the root of his name is *a-skallo*, which means the non-cultivated. When Hades gave Persephone the pomegranate, in order to capture her in the Underworld, Askalaphos – as dweller of the realm of Hades – was the only witness of Persephone's fatal act, without, though, trying to prevent her. Demeter, in her fury, transformed Askalaphos into a screech owl, which lived with Persephone in the Underworld. The connection of the transformed Askalaphos with the owl of Minerva may sound artificial, but paradoxically enough, in the ancient statue of Athena-Nike, Athena holds in her left hand a pomegranate, and the Athenians also called her their Kore, that is their Persephone.

The myth stops here, and the book continues with other stories. What happened to the owl afterwards, we do not know. It may have stayed for ages in the Underworld, perhaps waiting until the defeat of the old regime of Cronus and the victory of the Olympian Pantheon, whence it might have flown into Metis' body. For Metis does not simply means counsel, measure and order. Metis was a Titaness, and thus her measure stands for the old order, that pertaining to the age of the Titans and not to the order of Zeus. And this is, possibly, the missing

link between Athena's masculine nature and her feminine countenance, and not her counsel aspect, which does not necessarily modify her masculine temperament, nor contradict Zeus' order.⁴ For, if Metis' order were that of Zeus, he would not feel threatened by her forthcoming child. The owl now seems to be Demeter's wild creation, and moreover, the irresponsible, uncultivated child of the river of the Underworld and the darkness, nurtured by pomegranates and forbidden desires. This child had probably to wait until the *polis* needed to consolidate Zeus' order, and the Athenians to establish their Panhellenic, victorious identity – against the 'barbarian' invaders – in order to be transformed into the prudent goddess. Athena's mysterious past appears as impregnable as the goddess herself – in her prominent image – and betrays itself only in the enticing fruit that she holds in her left hand. Yet, there are other suspicious stories that also reveal a less bright, rather dark aspect of the goddess, as the following, written by Philostratus: Athena was chased by Hephaistos, but she resisted him, and his semen fell to the Earth (Chthon). However, out of their strife (*eris*), a child was born, Eri-chthon. Athena sought to save the child and to bring it up in secret. She received it from earth and she laid the child in a covered basket – probably such as those that are used in the Mysteries. From the basket a serpent crawls out, and later it was said that Athena – no longer the virgin maiden – had borne a serpent.⁵

If in ancient times, Athena was the mother of a serpent, by the time the Parthenon of Athens was dedicated to Mary as mother of God, Athena was officially recognised as the Mother of God, Thetokos, while in the Age of Enlightenment she stands again for the power of human reason, the owl of Minerva. What Athena would be in Schelling's visionary epoch of a new mythology, it is hard to guess.

It may now have become obvious why we began our concluding remarks with these two different myths with regard the birth of Athena. This investigation, as a whole, revolves around these two depictions: Athena as solid goddess of the brightness and purity of reason, immutable order and restitutive power, and Athena, as elusive goddess of transmutations, unknown flights and unpredictable images.

In fact, in the course of this research we met some of her transformations. We found her rescuing Dionysus' heart, and sitting silently by *Logos* – as *Sophia* – but mainly, we saw her fighting for order and power. The latter image stands for the mode through which the

goddess has predominantly been understood by the modern era. She has been identified with the realm of human reason in its order-giving authority, normative comprehension of the world or its possessive appropriation. Accordingly, we saw the confinement of the notion of cognitive experience to the realm that precisely falls under the aegis of reason, that is, under its rules, precepts or voluntaristic drives. We found, though, that this was too narrow a realm to express a restless and ever-transformative goddess.

Schelling's thought points to the discovery of the unsettling images of the goddess. He understood her not only as the sensible virgin, moderate counsellor and protectress of the *polis*, but also as mistress of *Logos*, impulsive actress, destroyer of *polies*. He discovered that the goddess of calm reflection emerges from intractable longing and furious passions. He called us to rediscover the goddess in her inexhaustible transmutations in the theurgy of the cosmic becoming and the 'magic of insoluble life'.

Hence, we may now turn to the main conclusion of this research, which is philosophy's need for a radical reconsideration of the notion of experience. In the course of this investigation, we first examined the *logic* of experience, through Kant's and Fichte's accounts of experience.

Kant's major contribution is the thematisation – in various ways – of the *aporia* of cognitive experience: the *aporia* of phenomenal knowledge in its juxtaposition to the noumenal realm, the riddle of judgement-power, the perplexity of reflection in its confrontation with the disorderly abundance of nature, the normativity of Reason's Architectonic. However, the original question of the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgements pre-empts the *solution* to the *aporia*. For, the very formulation of this question essentially amounts to the necessity of the invention of the foundational conditions for the *attainment* of synthetic *a priori* knowledge. This, as has been shown in the first chapter, leads to the reduction of the notion of experience to the formal rules of the understanding; a model, which presupposes and satisfies the conditions for an identical-through-time formal subjectivity. Cognitive experience appears as an internally consistent, organised and transparent whole, which manages to purify itself from the enigmas of the world. These are compacted to the realm of noumena, as if, in this way, understanding can do its work unperturbed, namely, the ordering and systematisation of the world. However, this task

appears impossible when reflective judgement confronts the contingent, which escapes the rules of the understanding. It is the confrontation with the contingent that stirs the rigidified conceptualisation of experience in the *CPR* and forces the understanding to a free play with imagination. Reflection, in its engagement with the inexhaustible richness of the world, appears puzzled and powerless. Its previous entitlements to legislative authority upon nature are rendered 'illegal', and moreover, no other contract seems to be forthcoming. For the free play between understanding and imagination excites the feeling of life in the judging subject and life can hardly be regulated by contracts. However, reflection, instead of welcoming its puzzlement – through a deeper engagement with the paradoxes of life – turns to the secure realm of Reason: Reflection, even in the elusive case of the contingent, *must be able* to accomplish *synthetic a priori* judgements. The latter, if they cannot be constitutive of experience, should at least be prescriptive. Hence, Reason from Judge becomes an Architect, in order to establish this time its harmonious edifice rather than its severe tribunal. In both cases, experience is eventually conceived as the outcome of a syn-thetic activity, performed by the judging subject: a constitutive synthesis of the understanding, which transforms the fragmented spatio-temporal representations into an orderly, unified cognitive judgement, and a normative synthesis, of the harmonious mental state between understanding and imagination, which transforms the contingent into a final object for the Architectonic of Reason. Both syntheses attempt an ultimate resolution of the enigma of cognitive judgement, while the world remains essentially opaque and alien to the subject. Thus, the enigma of the world loses its fascinating and provocative dynamics, since it is either settled in the rules of the understanding and the precepts of reason, or expelled to the realm of pure faith: the aporia of cognitive experience oscillates between an orderly settlement and a static fixation.

Fichte's account of experience turns the Kantian duality between knowledge and faith into their identity: the faith in logic and the logic of faith. His project essentially amounts to a severe logical enterprise to prove his faith in the absolute self-positing ego. Fichte's identity-thinking does not rescue the notion of experience from the limitations of the representational model. In fact, it enhances them, since in Fichte's account, experience is entirely exhausted by the ego's determinations,

without even acknowledging the subjective and limited character of these determinations. If Kant expels the divine from the realm of experience, Fichte appropriates it and deforms it by reducing it to the absolute, primordial ego. Identity-thinking, rather than providing a richer notion of experience than the representational, leads to a doctrinaire account of experience: a dual separation between subject/object, self/world, infinite/finitude, is substituted by their identity, where the absolute ego absorbs the world and its enigma. This is the case, in a reverse way, with Schelling's early Identity Philosophy, which, due to its obsession with the concept of the Absolute, constructs the *faith of experience*.

Our main point consists in the need for a radical approach towards the notion of experience, so that it challenges both the logic and the faith of experience, through the *logogrif* of experience. This is intimated by Schelling's original insights into the notion of cosmic theurgy and man's active engagement with it.

The *logogrific* approach towards the notion of experience recognises neither the Architectonic of Reason nor the Architectonic of the cosmos: it neither expels the divine nor exalts it. *Logogrif* welcomes the divine in the world, in its enigmatic multiplicity, sensuality and spirituality, mortality and regeneration, transcendence and immanence. The *logogrific* notion of experience thus maintains the enigma of the world, in its most various and unpredictable manifestations, thereby enhancing the dynamics of man's active engagement with it. Cognitive experience springs from the most diversified shapes of life, which, in their exuberant richness, carry the enigmatic unity of the most intense contradictions: the *logogrific* approach transforms the static aporia into a moving and ever-transmutable riddle.

Therefore, we come to the conclusion that experience cannot be reduced to the 'minimal'⁶ level of the orderly classification of the world, according to the rules of the cognising consciousness and the latter's need to consolidate its firm identity; neither can it be sought in the enlarged normative reconstructions of the Architectonic of Reason. Moreover, experience cannot be degraded to the ego's obsessive possessiveness and jealous wilfulness. Instead, through Schelling's insights,

we have seen a more inclusive and yet incomplete and allusive notion of experience, which derives from the untameable realm of the cosmic theurgy and the inexhaustible multifariousness of life. In this context the recurrent problem of the subject–object dichotomy is readdressed by an innovative approach: this dichotomy is not suspended by the ego’s will nor does it alternate in thought’s recollective inversions. The subject–object polarity blurs in the magic of life itself, which stands for the paradoxical realm of their *indifference*, the enigmatic indifference of both their highest autonomy and deeper bond. The *logogrific* notion of experience is woven by a *longing consciousness*: longing for penetration into the mysteries of the cosmos, longing to decodify, experience and play with them. This notion includes the erratic, ineffable and recurrent history of the unknown forces of the unconscious, the inscrutable history of the life of the gods, the theurgic history of the cosmic becoming. These histories, though, as histories not of self-consciousness but of its ‘others’, are mythologies. Accordingly, *Logos* needs to reflect not only upon its own history but also upon its pre-history and the history of its ‘other’: *Mythos*. This brings us to the brink of a forthcoming project, namely to the investigation of the relation between *Logos* and *Mythos*, through their entangled history, but also in the light of their intriguing future.

Notes

Introduction: from the Logic to the *Logogrif* of Experience

1. F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy* (Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 12, 15.
2. It is Immanuel Kant who set the scene and formulated the conditions of the debate about the notion of experience, by sharply distinguishing between Reason's legitimate and illegitimate provinces.
3. The term *logogrif* was coined by Schelling; see *Of Human Freedom*, p. 35, footnote.
4. *Of Human Freedom*, p. 34.
5. See *KPM*.
6. *SK*, p. 6.
7. *Of Human Freedom*, p. 41.
8. This is the main significance of the term 'perception' in the representational model of cognition. Here, Schelling implicitly inaugurates a different approach towards the notion of perception which in many respects, anticipates Henri Bergson's account of perception in *Matter and Memory*.

1 Kant's Transcendental Deduction: the Conceptual Reconstruction of Experience

1. 'Since these sciences exist, it is quite proper to ask how they are possible; for that they must be possible is proved by the fact that they exist' (*CPR*, B21).
2. In the *Prolegomena*, Kant distinguishes between 'judgements of experience' and 'judgements of perception'. The distinction is made in terms of the employment of the concepts of the understanding, which render the first kind of judgements objectively valid, and the use of mere logical connections of perception in a thinking subject, which render the latter judgements subjective and contingent. Kant does not sufficiently clarify the features of the mere logical connections of a thinking subject. He rather provides as explanation only the result of their employment, namely judgements that are valid for a specific subject and are deprived of universal validity. He does not, though, elucidate, at this stage, the relation between these mere logical connections with the concepts of understanding. It is only in the *CPR* that the formal character of the concepts of the understanding is brought into relief, and the notion of self-consciousness acquires, concomitantly, formal status. This may also be the reason for the hypostatized interpretation of the term 'consciousness in general', that appears in the *Prolegomena* as the source of the objectivity-conferring concepts.
3. '... if we have reason to hold a judgement to be necessarily universally valid (which never rests on perception, but on the pure concept of the understanding under which the perception is subsumed), we must consider it to be

objective also, that is, that it expresses not merely a reference of our perception to a subject, but a quality of the object. For there would be no reason for the judgements of other men necessarily to agree with mine, if it were not the unity of the object to which they refer and with which they accord' (*Prolegomena*, 298).

4. W. H. Walsh, *Kant's Criticism of Metaphysics* (Edinburgh University Press, 1975), p. 50.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
6. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic* (Indianapolis, Cambridge, 1991), p. 84.
7. See D. Henrich, 'The Proof Structure of Transcendental Deduction', *Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 88, where Henrich claims that Kant up to section 20 'does not clarify the range within which unitary intuitions can be found'.
8. G. Rose, *Dialectic of Nihilism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), pp. 15, 16.
9. See KPM.

2 From Determinant to Reflective Judgement: the Normalisation of Experience

1. Hannah Arendt interprets schema as an image, in order to parallel it with aesthetic judgement: 'It is something beyond or between thought and sensibility; it belongs to thought insofar as it is outwardly invisible, and it belongs to sensibility insofar as it is something like an image' (H. Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, hereafter *LKPP*, p. 82). Arendt is influenced by Heidegger's reading of Kant's notion of schematism, and the role of imagination in his work. In *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Heidegger interprets the schema as a schema image, but distances himself from a Platonic interpretation. He uses the term merely in order to emphasise the 'sensual' dimension of the schema (KPM, p. 97). This is again problematic, since the schema is considered by Kant as purely formal.
2. D. Bell, 'The Art of Judgement', in *Kant: Critical Assessments*, Vol. 14.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
5. This kind of conceptualisation of the notion of finality, namely in terms of the *primordial* familiarity in the aesthetic, recalls Heidegger's notion of pre-understanding. Arendt, in turn, projects this principle onto the realm of the social, through the notion of communicability. Communicability, based on common sense, represents the transcendental sociability of man, which enables him to establish a harmonious integration within society, which parallels to the harmonious pre-adaptation between man and nature. As Arendt characterises it: 'The term "common sense" meant a sense like our other senses – the same for everyone in his very privacy. By using the Latin term (*sensus communis*), Kant indicates that here he means something different: an extra sense – like extra mental capability (*Menschenverstand*) – that fits us into a community' [my emphasis] (*LKPP*, p. 70).

Arendt is concerned to advocate such a reading in order to invoke a principle which would prove man's essentially political nature: 'The Critique of Judgement is the only one of Kant's great writings where the point of

departure is the world, and the senses and capabilities which made men (in the plural) fit to be inhabitants in it. This is perhaps not yet political philosophy, but it certainly is its condition *sine qua non*. If it could be found that in the capacities and regular traffic and intercourse between men who are bound to each other by a common possession of a world (the Earth), there exists a principle, then it would be proved that man is essentially a political being', in H. Arendt, unpublished lecture from a course at the University of Chicago on Kant's political philosophy, Fall 1964; Hannah Arendt papers, Library of Congress, Container 41, 032272, cited in R. Beiner, *Political Judgement* (CUP, 1983), p. 141.

6. The assumption of finality as an *a priori* principle lies, in our view, in an original ontological separation of and juxtaposition between man and the world, that is, the Cartesian subject-object relation. The reconciliation of this gap, in turn, dictates solutions either of the kind presented by Leibniz that is, as a pre-established harmony between man and nature, or as that of the Kantian Copernican revolution, where the world conforms to the subject.
7. See, for example, J. F. Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* (Leland Stanford Junior University Press, 1984), and Bell, 'The Art of Judgement'.
8. If imagination worked exclusively in order to conform to the requirements of the understanding, and not for its own pleasure as well, then it would simply perform the work that it did in the First Critique, merely gathering together and uniting the manifold indiscriminately.
9. This interesting insight has been fruitfully endorsed by Schiller in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Schiller, however, modified Kant's mental state of free play, turning it into the play of two impulses – sensual and formal – and breaking the subjective character of aesthetic condition. Moreover, he elevated the notion of play into an alternative mode of man's interaction with the world and with himself in F. Schiller, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1994), pp. 137, 80:

In the midst of the awful realm of powers, and of the sacred realm of laws, the aesthetic creative impulse is building unawares a third joyous realm of play and of appearance, in which it releases mankind from all the shackles of circumstance and frees him from everything that may be called constraint, whether physical or moral. . . . For, to declare it once and for all. Man plays only when he is in the full sense of the word a man, and *he is only wholly man when he is playing*.

10. See Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, p. 20.
11. This new type of subjectivity is associated with the particular mental state of *Gemüt*, rather than with Pure Reason and its distinct faculties. As Howard Caygill notes, *Gemüt* 'does not mean "mind" or "soul" in the Cartesian sense of a thinking substance, but denotes, instead, a corporeal awareness of sensation and self-affection' (see H. Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary* (Blackwell, 1995), p. 210. In particular, *Gemüt* in the *CJ* is described as the 'life principle itself', which is quickened in the subject during the enlivened harmonisation of the cognitive powers – imagination and understanding – in their free interaction.

12. See H. Caygill, *Art of Judgement* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).
13. See Beiner, 'Judging in a World of Appearance', in *Political Judgement*.
14. *LKKP*, p. 14.
15. Arendt founds her reading of the Third Critique precisely on this 'property' of communicability along with its 'mental status'. According to Arendt, the communicable character of the judgement is the constitutive element of the pleasure or displeasure attending the judgement. 'It says it pleases or it displeases. It is called taste because, like taste, it chooses. However, this choice is still subject to yet another choice: one can approve or disapprove of the very fact of pleasing. . . . The very fact of approbation pleases, the very act of disapprobation displeases.' In short, 'the condition *sine qua non* for the existence of beautiful objects is communicability', in *LKKP*, p. 14.
16. See Bell, 'The Art of Judgement', and Caygill, *Art of Judgement*, where reflective judgement is considered as a precursor of determinant judgement, and in which the properties of the former are hidden or forgotten. However, the features which have been revealed in the activity of the reflective judgement are rather petrified and typified in determinant judgement.
17. Caygill, *Art of Judgement*, p. 350.
18. *Ibid.*
19. See P. Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 311.
20. See F. X. Coleman, *The Harmony of Reason* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974). Here Coleman, in order to make intelligible the solution to the antinomy of taste, proposes to interpret Kant's distinction between phenomenal and noumenal aesthetic properties as a distinction between mechanical (dead, wooden) and vital (inspired, fecund) ones. He then proposes, according to this model, that aesthetic judgement has to be characterised as 'vitalistic', that is, having a soul, and from this point of view, can be understood as having a supersensible ground. He also mentions that he draws the opposition between the vital and the mechanical from Aristotle's account of the soul.
21. See Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, p. 310.
22. The respective feeling is, in this case, the respect for the moral law.

3 Fichte's Will-to-Freedom: the Appropriation of Experience

1. Here, the term 'reflection' is used in the Hegelian sense. Hegel uses the term 'reflection' in a broad sense, referring to philosophy in general in so far as it is developed as reflection upon externally given objects, rigidly cut off from the subject, which usually stands above them. Reflection, thus conceived, is a way of thought permeated by dualisms and the positing of rigid dichotomies. This, according to Hegel, reaches its height in Kantian philosophy, where the mere positing of these oppositions leads Reason to irresolvable antinomies. This way of philosophising could not but include the investigation of the subject itself and the conditions of its self-consciousness, wherein the self turns itself into its own object. In turn, it was again Kant's philosophy which built, in Hegel's early terminology, the 'totality of limitations', that is the realm of the understanding, attesting to the limitations of Reason itself.

In Kant's thought, reflection appears in the *CPR* only in the Appendix on the amphiboly of the concepts of reflection, arising from the confusion of the empirical with the transcendental employment of the understanding. Here, reflection is mentioned as a state of mind, which intends to distinguish the representations that belong to pure understanding from those that pertain to sensible intuition, in order to avoid misuse of the concepts of the understanding and antinomies of Reason.

2. *SK*, p. 21.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
4. D. Henrich, 'Fichte's Original Insight', *Contemporary German Philosophy*, Vol. 1 (1982), pp. 21–2.
5. Henrich expounds the evolution of Fichte's theory of the self-positing subject in three stages in a detailed discussion. In the present chapter, we will not deal with details in the evolution of Fichte's thought, but treat it in a unified manner from the angle of the needs of our discussion. Elements of the internal subtle distinctions among the three stages will be only mentioned, as the detail would detract from the heart of the matter that inheres in all the versions, i.e. the subject–object structure of immediate self-consciousness.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
11. *FTP*, p. 118.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
13. Rose, *Dialectic of Nihilism*, p. 12.
14. *FTP*, p. 113.
15. See Second Introduction, *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte's discussion of Kant, pp. 48–53.
16. *SL*, p. 95.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
22. R. Williams, *Recognition: Fichte, Hegel and the Other* (SONY Press, 1992), p. 35.
23. *WL*, p. 108.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 130 (my emphasis).
29. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 140, 144.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
33. We would like to stress the authoritarian implications of the projection of this idea onto the sphere of the political.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 145 (my emphasis).

35. Ibid., p. 146.
36. Ibid., p. 147.
37. Ibid., p. 176.
38. Ibid., p. 181.
39. Ibid., p. 182.
40. T. P. Hohler, *Imagination and Reflection: Intersubjectivity* (The Hague/London: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), p. 39.
41. See *CPR*, pp. 46, 47 where Kant compares Reason, which seeks knowledge beyond sense conditions, to a light dove which 'cleaving the air in her free flight and feeling its resistance, might imagine that its flight would be still easier in empty space'.
42. *WL*, p. 189 (my emphasis).
43. *FTP*, p. 162.
44. It is in this context that we can understand the caustic character of the criticisms which Fichte initially received. Consider, for example, the following extract from a letter from Schiller to Goethe: 'To him the world is only a ball that the ego has thrown and that it catches again in "reflection"! By this logic he could have really declared his divinity, as we recently expected him to' (Schiller to Goethe, 28 October 1794, cited by Hans Blumenberg in *Work on Myth*, p. 266 and n. 5 (The MIT Press, 1990)).
45. *WL*, p. 42 (my emphasis).
46. Ibid., p. 193.
47. Ibid., p. 192.
48. Ibid., p. 281.
49. Ibid., p. 35.
50. This is why Hegel, in *Faith and Knowledge*, classifies Fichte's philosophy as faith rather than knowledge.
51. *WL*, p. 38.
52. Ibid., p. 54.
53. Henrich states, 'there is more to be seen in the thesis that the self posits itself absolutely than hubris and presumption; otherwise, we could not even begin to credit Fichte with a serious concern for truth. It can be read as the intelligible attempt to explain something whose existence no-one can doubt – the *reality* of self-consciousness.' For Henrich, this is the reason why 'the present age has turned a deaf ear' to Fichte. For contemporary philosophy replaced the talk about self-consciousness with the notion of *Existenz* and the analysis of language. Here, Henrich does not make any claim about the reality of self-knowledge as a completed act. He simply seeks to point out that the subject does come to a self-conscious state, that self-consciousness is a state that *can exist* and is not fundamentally impossible as the vicious circularity of the reflective model renders it. Though Henrich's main point is sustainable – that is, the reality of self-consciousness – the issue is to what extent this point can be convincingly defended by means of Fichte's self-positing ego.
54. Pippin also, in his reply to Henrich, uses the second introduction in *WL*, and stresses the 'intuitive character' of self-positing. See R. Pippin: 'Fichte's Contribution', *Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 19 (1988).
55. The latter dilemma has been posed in F. Neuhauser, *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), and resolved in favour of the former version.

56. Ibid., p. 44. Neuhauser mentions that this dilemma is one of the most fundamental controversies within Fichte scholarship. He supports the view that the first principle in the *WL* concerns only the theoretical part of the ego, as the 'Cartesian I'. This interpretation misses the heart of Fichte's enterprise, that is, the search for a principle which could found both theoretical and practical Reason.

Schelling's Notion of Experience: Introductory Remarks

1. See *PN*, p. 171:

For forces, after all, are nothing that can be presented in intuition. Yet there is so much reliance on these concepts of universal attraction and repulsion, they are everywhere so openly and definitely assumed, that we are automatically led to the idea that, if not themselves *objects* of possible intuition, they must nevertheless be *conditions* for the possibility of all objective knowledge.

2. *STI*, p. 6.
3. Ibid., p. 6:

To make the objective primary, and to derive the subjective from that, is, as has just been shown, the problem of nature-philosophy. If, then, there is a transcendental philosophy, there remains to it only the opposite direction, that of proceeding from the subjective, as primary and absolute, and having the objective arise from this. Thus nature-philosophy and transcendental philosophy have divided into two directions possible to philosophy, and if all philosophy must go about either to make an intelligence out of nature, or a nature out of intelligence, then transcendental philosophy, which has the latter task, is thus the other necessary basic science of philosophy.

4. See Hegel in the Preface in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Lectures in the History of Philosophy*, and contemporary commentators, as A. White, *Absolute Knowledge: Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1983), A. Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: an Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1993), M. Vater, in his introduction in *Bruno*.
5. See E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (Yale University Press, 1955), p. 3.
6. A typical example of this connection lies in Newton's mechanistic philosophy of nature along with his adherence to the notion of a transcendent God. A more subtle version of this 'worldview' would be Kant's account of the separation between knowledge and faith.

4 Identity Philosophy: Its Critique and Its Self-criticism

1. In the sense of including unconscious, reflective, volitional, moral and aesthetic moments.
2. *STI*, p. 28.
3. Ibid., p. 30.

4. System of Philosophy in General (1804), in *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory*, p. 141.
5. Ibid., p. 148.
6. Ibid., pp. 172, 173.
7. Ibid., p. 150.
8. Ibid., p. 171.
9. Ibid., p. 171.
10. *SL*, p. 324.
11. System of Philosophy in General, p. 171.
12. *PS*, section 16.
13. *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. III, p. 526.
14. *SL*, p. 138.
15. *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, p. 263.
16. Ibid., pp. 263, 269.
17. The notion of an infinite finitude is introduced in the *Bruno* essay which unfolds as a dialogue between Bruno, who stands for Schelling and Lucian, who represents Fichte. The topic of their dialogue is the Identity principle and quite soon the discussion focuses on the relation between Absolute and particulars. Lucian asks, 'How in the world can you reconcile this endless serial determination of things, which seem to pertain merely to existence within time, with the eternal being of things in their ideas?' It is at this point that Schelling broaches the notion of *infinite finitude*, which attempts to grasp Identity as a union of opposites and thus 'incarnates the dialectical impulse', namely, the tendency to either posit the infinite within the finite, or the reverse, to set the finite within the infinite. This method then, for Schelling, quoting Plato, 'is a gift of the gods to mankind, akin to that purest heavenly fire that Prometheus brought to earth'. See *Bruno*, p. 143.
18. Spinoza's Letter on the Infinite, p. 189, in *Spinoza, A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by M. Grene, p. 1973.
19. *System of Philosophy in General*, p. 156.
20. Spinoza's Letter on the Infinite, p. 183.
21. *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. III, p. 515.
22. *Human Freedom*, p. 12.
23. Ibid., p. 22.
24. Ibid., p. 23.
25. Ibid., p. 30.
26. Ibid., p. 33.
27. Ibid., p. 35.
28. Viz. Heidegger's reading of the *Freedom* essay, which will be discussed later.
29. *Freedom* essay, p. 88.
30. M. Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985), p. 121.
31. Ibid., p. 132.
32. Ibid., p. 123.
33. Ibid., pp. 128, 129.
34. Ibid., p. 161.

35. Ibid., pp. 78, 107, 110. 'Ground always means for Schelling foundation, substratum, "basis", thus not "ground" in the sense of ratio, ... The ground in God is that in God which God himself "is" not truly himself, but is rather his ground *for* his selfhood.'
36. See Slavoj Žižek, *The Abyss of Freedom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997) p. 6, whose interpretation of the relation between Ground and Existence develops in Heidegger's line of thought; 'the enigma resides in the fact that Ground is ontologically non accomplished, "less" than Existence, but it is precisely as such that it corrodes from within the consistency of the ontological edifice of Existence'.
37. *Freedom* essay, p. 35.
38. *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, pp. 161, 162.

5 Schelling's Dynamic Account of the Absolute and Finitude

1. *PN*, p. 150.
2. Schelling mentions in his *PN*, with regard to the phenomenon of combustion: 'If the secret of nature consists in the fact that she maintains opposed forces in equilibrium, or in lasting, forever undecided, strife, then the same forces, as soon as one of them acquires a lasting predominance, must destroy what they were maintaining in the previous state' (Book 1, p. 57).
3. Ibid., p. 149.
4. We quoted these two abstracts from the first and second edition (1797, 1801) of Schelling's *PN*, as indicative of Schelling's concept of the Absolute as a process of eternal self-division. Many commentators, among them Robert Stern – who wrote an introduction for the above book – see a substantial difference between the first and second editions. The first is considered to be based on the assumption of the polarity of nature which is 'purely dialectical – as the transition of one moment into its opposite or other – [while] in the second edition this polarity is conceived as the unfolding into difference of an original unity' (see Robert Stern's Introduction to *PN*, p. xxi).
- The above distinction is grounded on the interpretation of the Absolute as primordial, original, undifferentiated unity, and is derived from a misconception concerning the process of self-division itself.
5. See White, *Absolute Knowledge: Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics*.
6. *PN*, p. 145.
7. We can discern here the anticipation of modern theories of chaos.
8. See *PN*, pp. 150, 151.
9. *Of Human Freedom*, p. 31.
10. Ibid., p. 31.
11. Ibid., p. 33.
12. Ibid., p. 33.
13. Ibid., p. 33.
14. Ibid., p. 33.
15. *AW*, p. 122.

16. This term is found in Plato's *Timeus*, where Timeus explains to Socrates why he chooses to expound his ideas in the form of myth, here understood as an elliptic form of expression of truth by dint of the partial abilities of human reason:

Don't therefore be surprised, Socrates, if on many matters concerning gods and the whole world of change we are unable in every respect and on every occasion to render *consistent* and *accurate* account. You must be satisfied if our account is as likely as any, remembering that both I and you who are sitting in judgement on it are *merely human* and should not look for anything more than a εἰκῶτα μῦθος (likely myth) in such matters.

(Plato, *Timeus* 29c–d)

17. Ibid., p. 114.
 18. AW, pp. 135, 136 (my emphasis).
 19. Ibid., pp. 123, 124.
 20. Ibid., p. 126.
 21. Ibid., p. 136.
 22. Schelling's expression, referring to the primal longing in the *Freedom* treatise, p. 35.
 23. Nietzsche's expression in the *Genealogy of Morals*.
 24. AW, p. 136.
 25. Ibid., pp. 114, 115.
 26. Ibid., p. 123.
 27. *Of Human Freedom*, pp. 34, 359.
 28. Ibid., pp. 52, 376.
 29. AW, p. 144.
 30. As an example, we can notice the interesting similarity of Schelling's philosophy (in the AW and the *Freedom* essay at least) with the cosmogony of Simon Magus, the founder of the Gnostic sect. In the cosmogony of Simon Magus there is the idea of an eternal, unbegun power that subdivides itself, increases itself, finds itself, is its own father and mother, its own son, one, the root of all things, and is itself Desire. It is a pre-conscious totality which contains ego and the unconscious; through desire, it creates all things. This desire to create comes from fire and is also the origin of consciousness, of Logos. Intense terms such as hunger are also met in old Hindu texts of ancient creation myths (cf. Marie-Luise Von Franz, *Creation Myths* (Spring Publications, 1972)).
 31. E.A. Beach, *The Potencies of Gods: Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, c. 1994), p. 113.
 32. *Of Human Freedom*, p. 71.
 33. Ibid., footnote on 389, p. 111.
 34. Ibid., footnote on 392, p. 111.
 35. AW, p. 145.
 36. Ibid., p. 146.
 37. Ibid., p. 144.
 38. Ibid., p. 145.
 39. Ibid., p. 145.
 40. Ibid., p. 145.

41. See for example:

the forces become *perceptible to each other* [my emphasis], but without fighting each other. This is the first pure joy of mutual finding and being found. Essence should, by right, be *in-itself*, and it is not without bliss that it senses its first and purest reality; the negating power, for its part *rejoices* [my emphasis] in the soothing of its harshness and severity, in the quieted hunger of its attracting desire. For unity or for spirit, however, the opposition serves as an external pleasure [lust].

(AW, p. 145)

Or,

Now because the opposites are not bound to each other, or to unity by a necessary link, but rather only by the inexhaustible pleasure of having and feeling the presence of each other, this is the freest life, the life that plays with itself, as it were, filled with ceaseless excitement and bursting with its own renewed vitality.

(AW, p. 145)

42. AW, p. 143.

43. Ibid., p. 162.

44. Ibid., p. 161.

45. Ibid., p. 154.

46. Ibid., p. 161.

47. This suggestion is also made in the *Of Human Freedom* essay.

48. AW, p. 158.

49. Ibid., p. 162 (my emphasis).

50. Ibid., p. 163.

51. Ibid., p. 161.

52. This is Heidegger's account of man's redemption from his homelessness and original finitude. Paradoxically, this may happen by means of the very recognition of man's relentless finitude in his confrontation with the 'prevailing whole' or the 'mystery of Being'. This moment, however, only proves man's radical finitude and fundamental futility, which, yet, by virtue of this, holds a redemptive character, as act of artistic despair and abysmal authenticity. See *IM*, pp. 155–8.

53. AW, p. 167.

54. Ibid., p. 119.

55. Ibid., p. 152. 'Matter's spirituality seems to be liberated again with the waning or transforming of that outer potency that restricts the freedom of its inner life: this time the outer potency is more clearly specified as the *coagulating* potency.'

56. Ibid., p. 151.

57. Ibid., pp. 152, 151, 150.

58. Ibid., p. 126.

59. Ibid., p. 127.

60. Ibid., p. 134.

61. *Bruno*, p. 173.

62. Ibid., p. 182. 'The succession of seasons is not alien to things that actively contain time, things such as migratory birds that steer their flight toward another climate and thus act as an indicator of time.'
63. *Bruno* essay, p. 175. 'But any individual thing is more self-identical the more perfectly it incorporates time . . . unifying difference through the identity of the concept and of the line, which is the expression of self-consciousness.' Or, 'Just as the thing constitutes its time by containing an actuality whose possibility lies outside of it or a possibility whose actuality lies beyond it, so too does the concept insofar as it is simply finite' (*Bruno*, p. 180).
64. *AW*, p. 162.

6 Schelling's Conception of the Self

1. *STI*, p. 11.
2. Ibid., p. 32.
3. Ibid., p. 41.
4. Ibid., p. 45.
5. Ibid., p. 47.
6. As we discussed in Chapter 3, Fichte simply postulated the productive character of the self-positing ego but he did not further develop the productive process of self-consciousness. Productivity was rather exhausted by the ego's striving to deduce all the determinations of experience from its original act. The latter was carried through the introduction of external 'synthesising' concepts, rather than through the immanent dynamism of the productive process itself. Moreover, in Fichte's system the only active force is the self, while the not-self remains passive. Schelling, in this work, also seeks to deduce the whole of experience from the original act of absolute self-consciousness – and here is the point where the limits of the *STI* are to be found. However, this deduction is carried through the elaboration of the productivity of the two conflictual, active forces, pertaining to both self and nature, allowing thus a more dynamic conceptualisation of the process of the self.
7. *STI*, p. 50.
8. Ibid., p. 48.
9. Ibid., p. 74.
10. Ibid., p. 51.
11. Ibid., p. 103.
12. Ibid., p. 103.
13. Ibid., p. 73.
14. Ibid., p. 219.
15. Ibid., p. 221.
16. *AW*, p. 172.
17. Ibid., p. 137.
18. *AW*, in translator's introduction (State University of New York Press, 2000), p. xii.
19. Here, the term 'negation' has not the Hegelian meaning of determination, but rather the literal sense of the word, namely, denial, rejection or, since it refers to potencies, the power to annul or annihilate another power.
20. *AW*, p. 114.

21. Ibid., pp. 163, 164.
22. Styx is the name for a river-lake and goddess of Greek mythology, that nine times encircles and confines the Underworld. It is by the same lake that Persephone was playing with Okeanides – nymphs of the deep sea – and suddenly was abducted and carried off by Hades, once she caught the radiant flower narcissus.
23. This was, for example, the fate of Pentheas; see Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book III.
24. *STI*, pp. 232, 233.
25. Ibid., p. 231.
26. Ibid., p. 231.
27. Ibid., p. 221.
28. Ibid., p. 232.
29. See Robert Brown's philosophical interpretation of the *Deities of Samothrace* (Schelling's *Treatise on The Dieties of Samothrace*, Scholar Press, 1977). In this commentary, Brown analyses the significance of the deities of Samothrace by reducing them analytically to the corresponding potencies which are expounded in the *AW*. In this way, Brown misses the multi-dimensioned significance of each deity, since each potency in the *AW* describes at an abstract and conceptual level the various moments of the cosmic movement. Brown, though, states that in the *DS* there is a shift from mere 'structures of thought' to the actuality of beings, ascribing to Schelling a shift from the realm of pure thought to the realm of ontology. This is argued on the basis of Schelling's transposition from the 'highest reality of thought' to that of the will, which started already midway in the *AW*. However, as we saw, Schelling even from the *STI* never conceived the 'highest reality' in terms of mere thought, but in terms of the absolute productivity, which anticipates his later concept of will. The shift, that we also argue for, from the potencies to gods, does not mean that Schelling now values more reality in its ontological independence from thought, but that this reality cannot be revealed and exhausted precisely by human productivity – viz. his early Fichtean aestheticism – since its theurgic movement *exceeds* man's productive powers and can be only partially experienced by them. Brown, by exhausting the deities of Samothrace as the three potencies of the *AW*, essentially annuls the shift that he states. As will be seen in the following chapter, our interpretation of the *DS* attempts to show that the transformation of potencies into gods does not consist in the transformation of concepts into wills, for the potencies were already conceived as wills. The shift brings about the *logografic* apprehension of gods as wills, which thus does not present the structural pattern of the three potencies. The latter, no matter how dynamic and transmutable it is, still conceives every entity as being characterised by the same potencies; instead, in the context of the cosmic theurgy, there is no structural correspondence between human and divine potencies, nor definite enumeration of them.
30. *AW*, p. 131.

7 The Deities of Samothrace: towards Schelling's Λογογραφική

1. Schelling's *Treatise on the Deities of Samothrace*, p. 17.
2. Ibid., p. 24.

3. AW, p. 169.
4. Ibid., pp. 172, 173.
5. These are only the conclusions that we draw from Schelling's extensive engagement with this issue; see AW, pp. 167–75.
6. See AW, p. 70.

We can therefore see that in the very moment when the Highest is supposed to express itself, it becomes the inexpressible. Let no one be mistaken about this, or waste time in debating against those who deny it. One must in fact insist on this very inexpressibility, because it is necessary for the highest life. If what wills to express itself in all life were not inexpressible by nature, how would there be any vital motion? How would there be an impulse toward expressibility, articulation or organic relation?

7. AW, p. 165.
8. *Schelling's Treatise on the Deities of Samothrace*, p. 19.
9. Ibid., p. 20.
10. Ibid., p. 29.
11. Ibid., p. 33, numbers 64 and 80 from Schelling's notes.
12. Ibid., p. 20.
13. Ibid., p. 20.
14. Socrates says in the *Phaedrus*: 'Our greatest blessings, come to us by way of madness . . . provided the madness is given by divine gift', *Phaedrus* 244A. The above expression is owed to E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (University of California Press, 1951), p. 64.
15. *Schelling's Treatise on the Deities of Samothrace*, p. 24.
16. Ibid., p. 35, Schelling's notes, number 80. In this note Schelling attempts to explain the non-hierarchical relation of Zeus with the previous deities, drawing on the Pythagorean doctrine of the generative monad. Although this mode of correlation may allude to a sort of emanationism approach – which Schelling otherwise rejects – the main issue arising from this note is that according to Schelling, Zeus does not constitute a highest, ultimate stage, but emerges out and sinks again to the other potencies. Also, we stress Schelling's interesting remark, that Zeus's number is always four, the number of order and completion. Carl Jung also, in his writings on the archetypes of the collective unconsciousness and the notion of quaternity, associated fourfold symbols and systems with the archetype of order, totality, oneness, fulfilment.
17. Ibid., pp. 24, 35, footnote 80.
18. C. Kerenyi, *The Cabeiri Mysteries*, in *The Greek Mysteries*.
19. *Of Human Freedom*, p. 63.
20. Schelling devotes extensive critical comments to scholars who reduce the Cabeiri polytheism to monotheistic dogmas or emanation systems, see *Schelling's Treatise on the Deities of Samothrace*, pp. 22–5.
21. 'In the later period of the Roman empire the once holy name of the Cabeiri was profaned through flattery; on coins not only the bust of the pious Antoninus or of Marcus Aurelius appeared, but even the head of a Domitian along with the inscription of the Cabeiri deities.' *Schelling's Treatise on the Deities of Samothrace*, p. 30.

22. This refers to Weber's caustic remarks on 'forced' and 'invented' attempts at rediscovering religious values and spiritual meaning in the modern era (M. Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', *Essays in Sociology*, edited and with an Introduction by H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 154–5):

Never as yet a new prophecy emerged (and I repeat here deliberately this image has offended some) by way of the need of some modern intellectuals to furnish their souls with, so to speak, guaranteed genuine antiques. In doing so, they happen to remember that religion has belonged among such antiques and of all things religion is what they do not possess. . . . If we attempt to force and to 'invent' a monumental style in art, such miserable monstrosities are produced as the many monuments of the last twenty years. If one tries intellectually to construe new religions without a new and genuine prophecy, then, in an inner sense, something similar will result, but with still worse effects. And academic prophecy, finally, will create only fanatical sects but never a genuine community.

23. *Schelling's Treatise on the Deities of Samothrace*, p. 30.

Conclusions: Helmet and Pomegranate

1. *Homeric Hymn to Athena*, cited in W. Otto's *The Homeric Gods* (Pantheon, 1954), p. 173.
2. Cited in Otto's *The Homeric Gods*, p. 173.
3. A. Shearer, *Athene, Image and Energy* (London: Arkana, 1998), p. 17.
4. See Otto's and Shearer's interpretations, where they attribute Athena's femininity to her counsel aspects and her action-oriented nature.
5. C. Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1961), p. 125.
6. See W. Benjamin, *Program of the Coming Philosophy, Selected Writings*, Vol. I (Harvard University Press, 1996). 'The very fact that Kant was able to commence his immense work under the constellation of the Enlightenment indicates that his work was undertaken on the basis of an experience virtually reduced to nadir, to a minimum of significance.'

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